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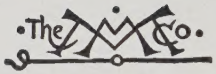
THE MYSTIC WILL



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THE MYSTIC WILL

Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme

BY

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this study is twofold. Its primary aim is to interpret Jacob Boehme's answer to the central problem of the philosophy of mysticism. It also presents a survey of the nature and historical significance of positive ethical types of mysticism.

The philosophy of Protestant mysticism has not received the attention it deserves. The world-denying mystics of the Middle Ages inherited from Neo-Platonism a well-known type of thought which has come to be considered as peculiarly characteristic of all speculative mystics. But mysticism has not always fled from the finite. This is evident from the experience of the Quakers and other ethically active mystical groups. A widespread, world-affirming type of mystical theory characterized by a well-rounded philosophy of its own, culminated in Jacob Boehme. I have endeavored to portray this positive attitude through an exposition of his ideas and experiences. To an age such as ours, torn between a desire to follow up the great success of its mechanistic theories and a yearning for mystic insight to pierce beyond the symbols of science, Boehme's philosophy conveys a striking message.

Historians of philosophy usually acknowledge the penetrating and prophetic character of Jacob Boehme's insight, but few have gone far in the analysis of his thought. The difficulty of his unique vocabulary in which, as William Law says, "Words were made to mean what they have never meant before nor have ever meant since," and the chaotic

rush of his ideas repel investigation. I have undertaken to paraphrase his obsolete pictorial language in modern terms, taking pains at the same time to supply a sufficient number of direct quotations to justify my interpretations. In this free rendering I have particularly emphasized those aspects of Boehme's philosophy which throw light on modern problems, passing over or touching incidentally upon the outworn history and the broken bits of mediæval pseudo-science which often appear in Boehme's pages and which to-day retain only an antiquarian interest.

In spite of Boehme's great influence, impartial studies of his system have been few. Some of his many followers have interpreted him in the light of strong religious bias, others attracted by his dark mysterious language have tried with his help to probe further into the secrets of nature than is permitted ordinary mortals. The general trend of conventional interpretation which appears in the various histories of philosophy was set by Franz von Baader (1765-1841) who was followed closely by Julius Hamburger (flor. 1844) and the Danish bishop, H. L. Martensen (1808-1884). In the endeavor to show that Boehme was an orthodox Christian teacher these writers have followed only the less original half of his exploration. They discovered his route from God to nature. But Boehme worked empirically from nature up to God before he charted the return trip. He is preëminently a philosopher of evolution.

Later writers have approached Boehme's thought from a variety of points of view. Three excellent, though brief, contemporary works are: W. Elert's monograph entitled *Die Voluntaristische Mystik Jacob Böhmes, Eine Psychologische Studie* (Berlin, 1913); three chapters by Rufus M. Jones in his *Spiritual Reformers of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (1914)

and the article by G. W. Allen under the heading *Jacob Boehme* in Hasting's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.* Christopher Walton's *Notes and Materials for a Biography of William Law* (London, 1854) is a mine of material for the patient reader. Dr. Herman Vetterling's volume entitled *The Illuminate of Görlitz,* of which fifty copies were privately printed in Leipzig in 1923, is a veritable Boehme encyclopedia and would have saved me some labor had I found it at the beginning of my study. A number of other works have contained useful material. These are acknowledged in connection with the discussion of the subjects to which they have contributed. I am frequently indebted to John Sparrow's seventeenth century translation of Boehme's works. A recent book by P. Hankamer (1924) has come to my attention since the completion of this manuscript. It is an interesting study which aims primarily at literary interpretation rather than philosophic analysis.

My own study differs from others in its analysis of Boehme's elaborate descriptions of the creative act and the corresponding evolutionary process from nature to spirit. In so centering my attention I have been compelled to ignore some characteristic aspects of Boehme's philosophy which have been more fully and more frequently treated elsewhere. Boehme's theory of evolution portrays a unique mystical ladder of genuine practical value to modern religious seekers and of real theoretical significance to students of the psychology and philosophy of mysticism. It has seemed worth while to devote the major part of the present discussion to a description and interpretation of this basic but hitherto neglected aspect of his thought.

Boehme's thought is in such close accord with certain aspects of two modern theories of mystical religion, one of

which was propounded by Baron F. von Hügel in his *Mystical Element in Religion,* and the other by W. E. Hocking in *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* that I have found these two works helpful. The same is true of E. Troeltsch's *Grundprobleme der Ethik* and A. Schweitzer's *Civilization and Ethics.*

I am indebted to Professor Rufus M. Jones for initiating me into this study and for encouraging its completion. My thanks are also due to Professor George P. Adams, who has given helpful advice and important suggestions during the progress of the work. Dr. Herman Vetterling has generously allowed me the use of his collection of books by and about Jacob Boehme. Miss Flora B. Ludington of the staff of the Mills College Library has kindly assisted in reading the proof.

INTRODUCTION

At last, after three hundred years, Jacob Boehme has found the interpreter who can both understand and transmit his vital message. He has been lying in the lanes of intellectual traffic like a mighty bowlder which every traveler had at least to recognize. Most students who have reviewed the period of history to which he belonged have walked around the bowlder and have noted its immense size. Some have described its weird form and shape as seen from the outside, and a few patient workers have attempted to penetrate it with acids or with drills, but it has all the time baffled them and remained a bowlder.

To the author of this book Jacob Boehme ceases to be a glacial bowlder lying in the path and obstructing the course of history; he is discovered to be an essential part of the main highway of human thought from the ancient world to the modern one. He has baffled the interpreter in the past because most of those who have struggled with the task of interpreting him have dealt with him as though he were an isolated and solitary mystic who, like Melchisedec of old, had no historical pedigree, but just mysteriously "came" and as mysteriously uttered his strange, prophetic revelations. Here in this book he is presented in his true historical setting. His spiritual ancestry is carefully traced. His peculiar debts to both the near and the far past are duly noted. His vocabulary is studied with insight, and, for Boehme's historical period, it is found to be neither weird

nor perverse. He was honestly endeavoring to beat out his message in the language which his generation and its forerunners had produced as the living speech of the time. It cannot of course be taken over without revaluation and be used as "current coin" to-day. It sounds to us like barbaric jargon with little meaning, "though the words are strong." The interpreter's task, therefore, has first of all involved the mastery of the vocabulary, the recovery of the key that opens what otherwise would remain a set of seven-sealed books.

The author has done that preliminary work with fidelity and with patient, painstaking skill. His readers will not be left in an uncharted waste to wonder at the meaning of words that sound as mysterious as "Jabberwock," "snark," or "boojum." "Salniter," "tincture," and "signature" will become old friends with whom the reader will have the ease of more than a speaking acquaintance. But much more important than the unique vocabulary of Boehme is the stock of ideas which he handles so profusely and withal so profoundly. They, too, seem foreign to our modern ears. He preceded Descartes and Newton in time, and was a contemporary of Galileo, so that he belonged in a prescientific epoch, and he was forced to do his thinking without the exact and carefully wrought concepts which were forged in the next century. He was the inheritor of that tremendous legacy that came down through the schools of Neo-Platonism, the Jewish Kabbalah, the strivings of the mystics, the pursuits of the alchemists, the passionate struggles of the spiritual reformers in the birth-period of the Reformation and the rich contributions of the humanists of the Renaissance. Boehme is the most vital single transmissive organ of this blend or fusion of thought-currents. The stream did

not flow through him unaltered, for the life-stream of historical movements can never flow through a genius and emerge the same as it was before.

A genius Boehme certainly was, and in a marked degree. He is not to be dismissed as a mere peasant or a shoemaker or a cobbler of Görlitz, nor is he to be classed without more ado as a "God-taught seer." He was to be sure a man who had almost no advantages such as come from systematic education. No refining culture came his way from schools and universities. He was forced to support his family by penurious labor. But he shows unmistakably that extraordinary gift of the genius who, the moment the opportunity comes, gathers up out of his environment what fits his main purpose, draws it to himself as by a magnet, reshapes it in the alembic of his own soul and turns it out forever marked with the "tincture" of his own spirit. Boehme was never satisfied to wait quiescently for truths to drop into his mind through some secret doorway. He grappled manfully with the problems of life and thought. To use his own words, his spirit "made a violent assault" on the dark issues of life and death, of heaven and hell. He steadily educated himself, for a person who has the quality of genius in his native fiber can turn a cobbler's shop into a college and can dig his way through the husks and coverings of truth until he reaches the inner kernel of it itself. If Boehme was "God-taught," it was because he seized every conceivable chance that lay open to him to quicken his mind and prepare it to be an organ of the divine Spirit. It often seemed to him that powers and forces from beyond him were working through him and were lifting him to heights that he could not have attained alone, but that something more than self operated only after he had done all that could be done with

the gifts and powers which he possessed as his own and with the sources of truth within his reach.

Jacob Boehme may well be called, I think, one of the most extraordinary cases in modern history of a man of no outward promise, no favoring circumstances, no advantages from school or college, no external helps of any kind, who, nevertheless, has made a permanent contribution to the intellectual life of the race and to the spiritual progress of the world. He belongs not only in the order of the "prophets," but he must as well be reckoned with as a thinker who has sounded the abysmal deeps of thought and being and has produced an interpretation of the universe which has profoundly influenced some of the greatest systems of modern philosophy.

But let no one suppose, too fondly, that now that Boehme has been successfully unlocked and interpreted he will henceforth be easy to read and digest. Boehme is still Boehme! If he proves to be a highway of thought rather than an obstructive bowlder across the path, it is at best a rugged highway, and much unbroken rock still remains to jolt the wayfarer. No reader who travels through Chapter V of this book will have any illusions left of an easy pathway to the eternal secrets of truth and life, of nature and grace, of evil and good, of the world and God.

If it takes "the world's eternal wars," if

> It takes the might of heaven and hell
> And the everlasting love as well,

to make a rose that blooms in the field, we should not expect to get at the secret of the unfolding world of light and darkness without some labor and sweat. But I, for one, feel that Boehme is worth the struggle that he costs. What-

ever one may conclude as to his wisdom about the processes of creation, there can be little question of his insight in reference to the ethical and spiritual issues of life. Here he has his finger on the beating artery. Best of all, his own life tallied with his message. He was a tender, gentle, loving spirit, full of grace and goodness. There is a perfume about him like that from his own "lily," which symbolized for him the coming of the Spirit into the lives of men. Any person is a better person for having lived in the neighborhood and atmosphere of Jacob Boehme, and we are grateful to Dr. Brinton that he has brought so much of the thought and life and spirit of this good man back into our time and climate.

Rufus M. Jones.

Haverford College,
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THE MYSTIC WILL

As German Boehme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once the plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquized with the cowslip on such themes
We find them extant yet in Boehme's prose,
And by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind,
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.

BROWNING, *Transcendentalism.*

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICAL MYSTICISM

I. Jacob Boehme and the Two Wills That Enact the Cosmic Drama

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), the inspired philosopher-shoemaker of the ancient city of Görlitz in Silesia, attacked the central problem of the philosophy of religion with unparalleled persistence and astonishing originality. This problem is the oldest of all great questions. The thinker of to-day finds it quite as difficult as did the agnostic who wrote the book of Job or the cynic who composed Ecclesiastes. How, he asks, can a God who meets the demands of my inner life be identified with the God who has created the outer world? Man desires God a Person, God immediately concerned for the welfare of each individual, ready to change the natural course of events to human advantage, but in nature blind impersonal force appears everywhere to prevail. Man desires God all-powerful and all-good, but His world seems full of evil, and the baffled mind concludes either that God is not good, or that He is not all-powerful. Man prays for a world beneath which are merciful and everlasting arms, but nature, red in tooth and claw, makes progress through pitiless destruction of the weak and helpless.

In the philosophy of Jacob Boehme as well as in many other important systems which aim at completeness, this religious conflict is tabulated as a special case under the

wider question of the relation between man's inner experience and his outer world. Early in life every one makes the obvious but significant discovery that his surroundings do not fully satisfy his desires. He finds perpetual tension between appetites, longings, hopes and aspirations on the one hand, and a comparatively cold, indifferent environment on the other. This tension between outer and inner is, as we shall find, the very substance of life itself. The discord between inner and outer first becomes vaguely apparent as a striving toward some dimly defined outer goal. At higher levels, as human desires become varied and sharply differentiated, man becomes more acutely conscious of the strain between himself and the world around him. The pleasure seeker seeks in vain for a completely pleasant experience; the artist is unable to embody in perfect material form his vision of ideal beauty; the poet finds words inadequate to express his deepest feeling; the reformer cannot entirely overcome the lethargy and indifference of men. These all testify to the apparent truth of the ancient observation that the cosmic process is unconcerned with human interests and incapable of gratifying to the full the demands of the human spirit.

The chief objective of philosophy is to discover the nature and to interpret the meaning of this seeming incompatibility between man's inner life and his outer world. The task of exploring the outer world as such is delegated to science, the inner realm tends to become the province of ethics, art, and religion. Philosophy's own peculiar endeavor is to show that outer and inner either can, or cannot, be reconciled. If, as is usually maintained by Western thinkers, outer and inner are ultimately reconcilable, the possibility of harmony relieves the pessimism resulting from their palpable hostility.

The world process is found to be at heart not alien to the deepest human aspirations for these longings can somehow find fulfillment in the fundamental nature of things. To realize this fulfillment man must assert himself, he must lord it over nature in the conviction that all his desires are capable of ultimate satisfaction. If, however, as is typical of Eastern thought, the world process is found to be evil and inimical to man, philosophy recommends self-denial and the destruction of desire. Every philosophy and every theology takes its distinctive coloring from the manner in which it attempts to reconcile ethical, artistic, and religious demands of the inner life with such scientific knowledge as has been attained regarding the outer world.

Boehme's own character and his entire experience were dominated by two absorbing interests, he was a fervent lover of nature and he was a devout worshiper of God. As he bent over his voluminous manuscript in the early morning before the workday at his cobbler's bench began, a transfiguring idea struggled to birth within him, an idea which he thought could identify the God of his soul with the God of nature. Sometimes the solution eluded him and his writing was dim with perplexity, but again it shone as brilliantly as the sunrise through his window and his pen could not run fast enough. In such flickering of alternate doubt and insight he wrote his first book which he called *Morgenröte im Aufgang* and which his learned friends later entitled *Aurora.* Boehme believed that his discovery marked a new dawn in philosophy. Though his exposition is often crude, inconsistent, and obscure, yet he showed himself a true prophet, for this strange book and the others which were to follow unmistakably hold germs of a new philosophy. Boehme's idea, wedded to other influences which were rap-

idly maturing in northern Europe, was to generate both a great intellectual movement and an important religious revolt.

Jacob Boehme has been appropriately styled "the father of German philosophy." [1] The ancestry of his thought is no less significant than its posterity, for in him culminated the little known, and less understood tradition which struggled for more than a millennium to demonstrate experimentally a Platonic conception of nature. This so-called "Hermetic philosophy," or "philosophy of the alchemists," is inextricably embedded in gross superstition and imposture. It contained, however, a valuable kernel, which was the sincere attempt to erect a natural science on a Neo-Platonic basis. In this effort it failed, but later, married to opposing Lutheranism, it gave birth to Boehme's speculations and through them passed into the romantic idealism which characterized the full flower of German philosophy from Fichte to Schopenhauer. Through Boehme the alchemistic tradition also passed into English romanticism and into many other protests against shallow rationalism or materialistic science.

A more prolific crop of descendants than this select group of poets and study-room philosophers looked to Jacob Boehme as one of its ancestors, for his interests were not only theoretical, they were also practical. His burning ambition was to save souls. As a religious reformer he united in an articulate system the scattered and often discordant theories of the mystical left wing of the early Reformation and in so doing he became the chief exponent of Protestant mysticism. A host of translations of his writings furthered the rapid spread of the doctrine of the Inner Light to Hol-

[1] Boutroux, *Le philosophe allemand, J. Boehme,* 1888.

land and England in the middle of the seventeenth century. No great mystic drew from wider sources than did Jacob Boehme nor has any served as leader for a more extensive and varied following. In him converged the broad, though shallow and muddy currents of mediæval nature philosophy which wound their way far from the well-defined channels of the philosophy of the schools, through wide, sandy plains of the life of common folk. From him went forth two streams of speculation; one emptied directly into the clear depths of German idealism, the other flowed by devious mouths into the turbulent, but fructifying floodtide of the great outpouring of popular mysticism in England of the Commonwealth. A multitude of mystical sects, of whom the Quakers are the chief survivors, looked to Boehme as the philosopher of their movement. It has been said that "mystics arise in every sect, but form none." [2] But Boehme's mysticism was of a type which could found a sect. His feet were on the earth, though his head was sometimes above the empyrean.

There is a universal quality in Boehme's mystical philosophy, through which it touches the whole of man, defining his relation not only to God, but also to society and to nature. This is a significant and peculiar trait. The early seventeenth century was a period of transition when moribund mediævalism was confronted by spectacular alterations in philosophy and science. The Middle Ages had faced the other world, the Renaissance rediscovered this world. Boehme attempted to reconcile a this-world life with an other-world attitude without diminishing the value of either. The central problem of the philosophy of religion is occasioned by the antithesis between the longing to live in that

[2] Beard, *Luther*, p. 43.

perfect other world in which God's rule is everywhere apparent and the necessity of making the best of the present imperfect life. Boehme stood at the crossroads; he looked back with a mediæval longing for salvation from the world and forward with a modern hunger for knowledge about it. So it came about that he discovered a way to heaven, and mapped a return trip with equal care. In him were strangely mingled primitive nature mysticism, Lutheran theology, alchemistic speculation, mediæval metaphysics, and a modern objective attitude toward man and nature. He set himself to reconcile their conflicting claims. Monistic systems develop in ages of comparative tranquillity, dualistic and pluralistic systems in ages of doubt and transition. Boehme was dualistic, his attention was fixed both on the sensual and the supersensual. His century saw the change from mystic to mechanistic science. Boehme is a peculiarly significant figure for our own time when a transition in the opposite direction is beginning to be apparent. Seventeenth-century mechanistic conceptions seem now to be giving way before the impact of the latest revolutionary discoveries in physical science. The result is an attitude which suggests the vitalistic thought of the Renaissance.

Boehme himself would have had small sympathy with an historical approach to his philosophy. He had no desire to interpret a bygone system of thought nor did he care to found a tradition. His interest was pragmatic. He aimed to develop a philosophy of life. He longed to *be*, not to *know* the answer to his problem and he was zealous for others to find the same peace and harmony between inner and outer which he eventually achieved for himself. Little wonder, therefore, that few have seen him in true historical perspective. His intense struggle for emancipa-

tion rivets the attention of readers upon him as if he were an isolated meteoric phenomenon rather than a thinker whose work entitles him to an important place in the history of philosophic and religious thought. The "hellish burning fire" as he calls it, which drove him relentlessly on till it was at last transformed into divine, benignant light appears to have belonged so completely to his inner life, and to have been so little affected by external circumstance that we are easily blinded, both to the past which kindled it and to the future on which it shed unearthly radiance.

It is true that Boehme is not merely a creature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his pages is envisioned the *Universal Man* of every time and of every place whose inner conflict he so vividly dramatizes. He undertakes to pierce to the core of the human soul, and to describe with detail worthy a psycho-analyst the inner tension of which we are all aware, but which we so little understand. Man is for him a complex epitome of history and nature, the microcosm of the macrocosm. Boehme believed that the same conflict which existed in his own soul was present in the soul of every living thing, that it was also inherent in physical nature, and that it was an essential attribute of Deity Himself. To understand this conflict was to understand the mystery of life. To find a solution was to reach the goal of existence, the Kingdom of Heaven. The ecstatic shoemaker of Görlitz struggled to express the great experience which had harmonized conflicting forces in his own soul with the single purpose of assisting others to the same new birth.

The inner tension out of which philosophy arises is profoundly expressed by Troeltsch in his *Grundprobleme der Ethik*. This modern Protestant philosopher does not agree

with Boehme that a solution is possible in temporal existence.

> This entire Dualism [he says], (pp. 665-666) . . . is, in fact, deeply rooted in the metaphysical constitution of man. It places him between the transitory and eternal worlds. The contrast of ethical motives is only an evidence of the general contrast which results from man's dual position as facing both the finite-sensible and the infinite supersensible. . . . Man will always experience double motivation, but it will never be overcome on earth, either theoretically or practically. Since it has a metaphysical root, it can only find a metaphysical solution. Therefore as a final solution the thought arises of a life the other side of death.

Boehme recognized the "metaphysical root" of the dualism, but was unwilling to postpone the solution. He believed that there was a sense in which the Kingdom of God "where all working and willing is in quiet love" (Supers. L. 42)[3] could be realized even on this obviously imperfect earth. Life is more than a pragmatic leap in the dark, for sometimes, though possibly only for a moment, we arrive at our goal. Troeltsch's dualism appears in Boehme in an exaggerated, self-conscious form. Intense religious feeling pulled him toward the infinite supersensible; poignant sympathy with nature and life attracted him as strongly toward the finite sensible. He experiences sounds, colors, tastes and smells with intense vividness. When he describes Deity in the *Aurora* as an "all mighty, all wise, all hearing, all smelling, all feeling, all tasting God," he idealizes his own craving for exquisite physical sensation. His figures of speech were drawn from nature. Natural objects furnished him so significant an element of his total vocabulary that Hegel accuses him of being incapable of purely abstract

[3] Boehme's works are referred to by abbreviations. See the list in the Appendix for titles of books to which the abbreviations refer.

thought and calls him a "Barbarian." [4] The *Aurora* begins and continues in a picturesque naturalistic vein.

> Although flesh and blood cannot conceive the Divine Being, yet the spirit can do so if enlightened and kindled of God. If man would speak of God and say what he is, *he must diligently consider the forces of nature* and the whole creation, heaven and earth, as well as the stars and elements and the creatures which have come out of them, and angels, devils and men, heaven and hell.

Boehme's philosophical library was nature itself. "Thou wilt find," he says, "no better book, in which the Divine Wisdom can be searched for and found, than a green and blooming meadow." (T. P. 8:12.) His first great illumination was occasioned by seeing the sun's rays reflected from a pewter plate. This vision which was outwardly directed, taught him that nature itself was a mirror of Deity.

But an æsthetic nature mysticism was balanced in Jacob Boehme by an equally strong religious mysticism pulling in the opposite direction. His passions were as strong as his sensations, and he longed for peace. A typical expression of his facing toward the supersensible occurs in the following revelation:

> In this last trial man becomes the image of God again, for all things become one and the same. He is one with prosperity and adversity, poverty and riches, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, life and death. He is as nothing to himself for in his will he is dead to all things. He stands as a symbol showing how God is in and through all and yet is as nothing in all, for the all does not include him and is yet revealed through him. . . . He is dead to all things and is yet himself the life of all things; he is one and yet nothing and all. Thus a man becomes in his resigned will when he yields himself up entirely to God, for his will falls back into the unsearchable will of God out of which he came in the beginning . . . but that which wills of itself tears itself from the entire will of God and brings itself into self-hood wherein there is

[4] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie.*

no rest. Unquietness is the life of self will. . . . It is better to know nothing than to will self. The pain of the damned consists in this, that they will the particular (*Eigenheit*) and in their willing they generate structures (*Gestaltnisse*) which are wills and counter-wills which are at strife, so that the one is manifested in multiplicity wherein it is at war with itself, but if it is one with the eternal One, then there is no possibility of enmity. (M. M. 66: 63-67.)

Mystics in all ages have solved the problem by such a retreat to the One Being behind the wearying and baffling multiplicity of existence. There are many similar passages in Boehme and it is not surprising that some historians of mysticism believe that he, like his German predecessor Eckhart and the great mystics of the Church who inherited the Neo-Platonic tradition, sought only the "flight of the alone to the alone."[5] But this is only half the story and represents but one movement of Boehme's thought. He often declares that he intends to keep two worlds in his philosophy. He says, "When God reveals himself to man then is he in two kingdoms and sees with two-fold eyes." (T. F. L. 10:10.) "If a spirit is to subsist in the kingdom of joy then it must have a centre in itself out of which the joy springs, namely, the dark world which is a sharp might, else it would be a stillness without moving." (Antist. I, 90.) Boehme wanted no "stillness without moving" such as is sought in Neo-Platonic mysticism. He searched nature with such passion as could exist only in the child of an age which found the habitable earth intensely alive with spiritual potencies and mysterious powers. The result of these two opposing leadings, one toward mystic union with God, the other toward

[5] The so-called "Law translation" of Boehme's *Supersensual Life* is a beautiful piece of English, but it adds a great deal of material that is not in the original. This translation has misled several writers into thinking that Boehme is much more "negative" than he really is.

mystic union with nature, was such a struggle as few pens have attempted to describe. In this strife is summarized the long effort of the ages to draw out the Kingdom of God as it exists in the heart of a saint and unite it in the bond of love with this world of pain and evil. The final consummation comes in what Boehme calls the "process of Christ." The mystic is himself crucified on the cross of suffering. He pierces abysmal hell to rise on its other side a victor in the heaven of completely harmonized will. Boehme descants upon the struggle and victory in many pages of his writings. The battle was often renewed. Final peace was never won.

> Hear me [he says], thou half dead angel (man). . . . I must every day and hour struggle with the devil. . . . If he strikes me I fall back, but the divine power helps me, and then he gets a blow and often loses the battle. . . . And when he is overcome, then the gate of heaven is opened in my spirit and the spirit sees the divine and heavenly Being. Not outside the body, but in the fountains of the heart, goes the flash of sensibility, and in this the spirit sees. (Aur. 11.)
>
> After I found in myself a powerful contrary (*Gegensatz*) . . . I fought a hard battle with myself. What happened no one can know but God and my soul, but I would sooner have cast away my life than give up. While I was wrestling with God's aid, the gates in the deep of the heart of nature were opened and a wonderful light arose in my soul. In it I realized for the first time the true nature of God and man and the relation existing between them. (Apol. I, 21-26.)

Although "no one but God and my soul" could know, Boehme, with an inconsistency typical of all mystics, describes at great length what he saw. After years of effort to interpret such experiences, he discovered that his victory over the "powerful contrary" was the culmination of a complicated evolutionary process. This process in man is part of a similar process in God and in nature by which the light

of spirit is constantly reborn amid dark, struggling material forces.

Boehme found that the "contrary" which initiated the evolutionary process, and which furnished the motive power that carried it to completion, was an opposition between two "wills" or modes of activity. One is an "own will" (*eigener Wille*) which is directed outwardly, into nature toward the finite sensible and the other is a "resigned will" (*gelassener Wille*) directed inwardly, toward the infinite supersensible. The first goes toward the relative, the phenomenal, the multiplicity of things, the second goes toward the absolute, the ultimate, the primal unity. Boehme not only finds the two wills in himself, he envisions them also in nature even at its lowest level where they appear as "attraction" and "expansion." There is no problem in philosophy, religion, or science, and no event in divine, angelic, or human history, which cannot be interpreted as some phase of the eternal battle between the wills and their eternal reconciliation. They not only oppose each other, they create each other, for each is necessary to the existence of its opposite. Attraction cannot exist as a real force without an opposing expansion. On the conscious level of existence, the out-going will would not be aware of its own being, except through the instrumentality of the contrary will.

> Why does God permit the contrary will? . . . If it had nothing to resist it, it would continually of itself go outwards and return not again into itself. But if it returned not again into itself as into that out of which it originally went, it could know nothing of its primal being (*Urstand*). (Beschau. 1:7-8.)

The opposing will is like the soil which presses against the growing plant and yet nourishes it. It is like a dark object

which checks the light and yet makes it visible. The Son of God is born when the two contrary wills become "reconciled." But the word "reconciled" needs elaborate explanation. It requires the whole labor of philosophy to show how this theogony comes about.

Boehme attacks his problem through a study of nature, a study of himself, and a study of history. The *Mysterium Magnum,* which he considered his greatest work expounds his philosophy of history. It is a commentary upon the events recorded in Genesis. The only "history" with which its author was familiar was contained in the Bible, the Kabbalah and odd bits of tradition and folklore of which he made remarkable use.

As Boehme endeavored to relate his system of thought to the meager historical material of which he was aware, we shall similarly find it useful to construct an instrument of research based on historical data. The peculiar character of the problem presented to Protestant mysticism and Boehme's method of solving it can, perhaps, be best understood through a comparison with other types of thought. Such a comparison must necessarily be brief, and dogmatism is inevitable in sharp contrasts where there is little room for qualification. With this hint of caution let us proceed to find and evaluate Boehme's place in the history of mysticism.

II. Historical Types of Mysticism

Mysticism has, as a rule, been treated by its interpreters and historians as a type of reply to either or both of two problems, of which one is theoretical, the other practical. The theoretical problem is: "Can absolute truth be known?" The practical problem, usually presented in a religious or ethical form, is: "Can desire be completely satisfied?" Mys-

ticism replies that a kind of experience is possible through which both questions are answered in the affirmative.

The theoretical question arises because of the apparent failure of the mind to break through the screen of idea to objective existence. The mind and the world, the subject and object, appear to be quite separate and different from each other. In the mind we find a shadow world built of obscure reports of our imperfect sense organs. These images are not reality and there appears to be no sure test as to whether they even resemble reality. The mystic solves the problem, not as the idealist does by reducing reality itself to a greater world of ideas, but by brushing shadows aside and uniting with reality in a single indivisible experience which overcomes the subject-object distinction. Ideas, he holds, may be useful signposts which point the way toward this experience, but the experience itself cannot be expressed in terms of ideas any more than an object in nature can be completely expressed in terms of pictures, however many or suggestive they may be.

The practical or religious question arises when ecclesiastical formalism has failed to meet the needs of active interior faith. In church and creed, in sacrament and book, the mystic finds symbols of Divinity, not Divinity Himself. Man's highest desire cannot be satisfied by words about God, or descriptions of the ways in which God once appeared on earth. He wants God Himself in person here and now. The mystic finds Him. God and the soul are united in an indivisible experience which no symbol can adequately represent.

Cognitive mysticism which endeavors to answer the problem of knowledge, and religious mysticism which in similar fashion endeavors to answer the problem of salvation, both

face a well-known paradox. The first declares that reality cannot be expressed in terms of ideas, yet it cannot discuss reality without using ideas. Reality, it holds, is an ultimate, a goal to be sought and the theory of cognitive mysticism indicates its direction. But if the goal alone is real, the theory about it is unreal and hence of no value. We cannot journey to a real goal along an unreal road. Mysticism has usually recognized this difficulty and has taken refuge in the theory that a contradiction not resolvable in thought may be resolved in experience. However, as the statement of this solution is still a theory and not the experience itself, the difficulty remains.

Religious mysticism faces a predicament of similar character. Man seeks salvation from the pains and passions of finitude by retreating into the inner depths of his being where he becomes wholly absorbed in the infinite God whom he finds there. In so far as any part of his sinful self goes with him, just so far is his union with God incomplete. But, on the other hand, in so far as his sinful self is left behind, in just so far he is not saved. Either he retains his individuality, in which case he is not fully united with God, or he loses his individuality, in which case he, as an individual, is not transformed and saved. These paradoxes are not peculiar to mysticism. They are variations of the oldest of all philosophic problems, that of the one and the many. Experience unifies, for a single experience may include within itself many objects. The mind can find no logical reasons for this apparent self-contradiction. Hence rational philosophy is, and has always been, at war with irrational experience.

This fundamental difficulty can be examined in another way if we follow the guidance of Boehme's philosophy. Abandoning the conventional classification of mysticism as

speculative and religious, two types which historically overlap to a certain extent, let us introduce the conception of direction. Here, without attempting at present to deal with the many psychological and metaphysical problems involved, we may distinguish between an outwardly directed will, thought, feeling, or whatever name we may give to purposive psychic activity, and an inwardly directed will. That which is outwardly directed has for its ultimate object totality. It expands in order to include all things. That which is inwardly directed aims at unity. It seeks to contract upon pure subjectivity, to include nothing except that which it *is* in its own deepest self. The out-going will expands upon a world of many things unrelated by inner connections. Of itself it finds only multiplicity. It flies forever outward, seeking a goal in vain, until it becomes lost in the infinite reaches of space. The in-going will contracts upon a basic unity at the center of the soul, but as it contracts it leaves the world behind and becomes lost in the utter blankness of unity. Therefore neither the out-going nor the in-going will can find satisfaction in itself. The out-going will cannot be satisfied with an isolated bit of experience, for this bit finds its meaning only in the larger whole of which it is a part. The in-going will in abandoning worldly things must leave behind the very desire it seeks to satisfy. Mysticism arises when either the out-going or the in-going will tires of the fruitless search and leaps over self-imposed barriers to arrive at the goal. The out-going will finds as its goal a Principle, or God, or Law, which combines phenomena into a related whole. It pierces through the outer veil of symbol and appearance and unites with a farther realm of meaning which gives coherence and significance to the multiplicity of natural objects. Similarly the in-going will, search-

ing the heart of existence at last leaves all desire behind and, undefiled by pride and passion, enters the central Holy of Holies in the depths of the soul. Here it finds rest and peace. The goal of the out-going will is reached by positive romantic self-assertion, the goal of the in-going will by negative ascetic self-renunciation.

Both of these mystic attitudes exist in a wide variety of types. The first or out-going type may take the form of a poetic nature mysticism like that of Wordsworth when

> we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and deep power of joy,
> We see into the heart of things.[6]

Or it may be termed philosophic insight, as when Bergson says, "Philosophy just consists in placing one's self by an effort of intuition into the interior of concrete reality." [7]

Third, it may be defined as the æsthetic experience illustrated by Schopenhauer's genius who "does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of the reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this and lets his whole consciousness be filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present; . . . he can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one, . . . then that which is known is no longer the particular thing as such, but it is the idea, the eternal form." [8] Such æstheticism becomes mysticism only when it implies the objectivity of æsthetic judgment and so, in its contemplation of

[6] *Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey.*
[7] *Introduction to Metaphysics,* p. 86. (Eng. trans.)
[8] *World as Will and as Idea,* p. 231. (Eng. trans. by Haldane.)

nature, fuses real and ideal elements. These illustrations suggest for our first type the name "æsthetic mysticism."

Fourth, even the man of science may for a moment become an "out-going" mystic when in a flash of insight he seizes the universal aspect of some particular set of relations. He must later verify his inspiration by careful tests, but he is, nevertheless, a mystic when a rational process has taken the form of feeling, and is seen as apparently objectified in nature itself, rather than as a result of laborious analysis.

The negative or contracting type of mysticism is the simpler of the two forms and exhibits more historic uniformity. It seeks peace and unity by annihilating all thoughts and desires save one, the single idea of the absolute God. This is the famous *via negativa* which many mystics in all ages have trodden. "We shall," says Molinos,[9] "sink and lose ourselves in the immeasurable sea of God's goodness and rest there steadfast and immovable . . . happy in the state of the soul which has slain and annihilated itself." But even the single idea of God may not be nihilistic enough. "So long as ye desire," says Eckhart,[10] to fulfil the will of God and have any desire, even after eternity and God, so long are ye not truly poor. He alone hath true spiritual poverty who wills nothing, knows nothing, desires nothing."

In the philosophy of India as revealed in the *Upanishads* the negative inward way receives its clearest and most uncompromising expression. The goal of the search can only be described by "No, no. He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended. If a man understands the self saying 'I am He' what could he wish or desire that he should pine after the body. . . . They who know the life of life,

[9] Quoted by Inge, *Christian Mysticism,* p. 232.
[10] Quoted by Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* p. 375.

the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, they have comprehended the ancient primæval Brahman. . . . He who perceives therein any diversity goes from death to death. . . . He therefore that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient and collected sees self in Self, sees all as Self."[11]

Little wonder, then, that Boehme's soul was torn in twain. The in-going and out-going wills both pulled him powerfully. Obviously he could not at the same time follow both. Either he must go out into nature and leave the God of his inner life behind, or, remaining indifferent to nature, he must rest back upon God in his soul, and seek peace and security. He finally solved the problem through a type of mysticism which may be called "voluntaristic" because its goal is neither an inner static unity nor an outer static totality, but a harmonized activity of the will which goes from one goal to the other and back. This, we shall find, is not wholly a nature mysticism nor wholly a religious mysticism, but a mysticism of life which seeks both nature and God.

The essential quality of this third type of mysticism can be partially shown by pointing out a curious and important relation which exists between the expanding and contracting types. Each of the two wills, in approaching the mystic state, takes on the characteristics of the other. The out-going nature mysticism finds God, or at least some principle or thing-in-itself behind phenomena. But does not the nature-mystic, projecting upon the screen of nature a magnified image of himself, behold there meanings, purposes, spiritual powers derived from his own inner life? Are not Wordsworth, Bergson, and Schopenhauer objectifying their own subjective feelings? The out-flying will goes forth into

[11] *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* IV.

nature, and, wearied in finding only what is meaningless and indifferent to human fate, it pierces through nature, completes a full cycle, and comes back upon the self it left behind. Here it finds peace at last. Nature now appears unified, purposeful, and not indifferent to human fate because behind it is God, the deepest self of the mystic. The in-going will likewise finds its opposite. It proceeds in the search for God in the soul by leaving behind all thoughts, all desire, all that is relative and finite. It will have nothing of its sinful self. Accordingly the reality it seeks is wholly transcendent. Although it goes inward, it seeks not pure subjectivity, but pure objectivity, something wholly other than itself. Just as the out-flying will, on becoming mystical, pierces through objective nature to self, so the in-going will reaches its mystical stage when it pierces through self to the wholly Other, the ultimate reality which is everything that is not self. Thus it likewise completes a full circle and, though subjectively directed, finds the completely objective as its goal.[12]

[12] Thus outwardly directed mysticism exhibits a kinship to idealism though it is not strictly idealistic. Its world is the ideal self, the fulfillment of inner meanings, the deepest *ego* of the knower. Inwardly directed mysticism leans toward realism. It finds reality not by fulfilling, but by denying, desire and meaning. The reality, it seems, is that which is left over after all that is subjective is subtracted.

It may also be observed here that Mystical experience like other experience is either indefinable or self-definable. Idealistically the Mystical experience is definable as the fulfillment of my present will. Here it is subjective and self-definable. Realistically it is indefinable or definable only in negative terms, as being something which comes by denying the will, that is, it is purely objective. The duality consists in an idealistic definition and a realistic experience. Taking experience in the widest sense of the term as including both definition and thing defined, it is a perpetual alternation between idealism and realism, between a universe idealistically defined as my idea and a universe which may or may not correspond to this definition. The only way in which philosophy can obtain any peace is to be resigned to whatever happens in experience, that is, to leave room for negative mysticism. Mysticism may be defined as a synthesis of idealism and realism, in which an absolute defined idealistically is experienced realistically.

In this circular process by which each will is harmonized with the other by passing through a mystic stage we find the central conception of Boehme's philosophy. He calls it the "ring" or "hoop" (*Band*) in which "the end continually seeks the beginning." (40Q 1:225.) The conception which has been briefly outlined though far from being stated in the terms which Boehme uses, probably contains the key to many obscure passages in his writings such as the following:

> Every Being (*Wesen*) is in two beings an outer and an inner; one seeks and finds the other, the outer is nature and the inner is spirit over nature and there is yet no separation, except only temporally (*was in einer Zeit geschlossen ist*) where goal is parted from goal, so that the end finds the beginning. (40Q 1:211.)
>
> If one would do for the human mind (*Gemüth*) that by which it might find eternal rest, one must show it the root of the tree out of which Spirit and Flesh has its origin. One must show it the "centrum" of the eternal as well as the temporal nature that it may conceive the earthly and the heavenly "mysterium"; then is the eternal beginning and the eternal end all one; therein the spirit of the soul finds rest for it sees the whole wheel at once. (*das Rad ganz*) (Anti-Stiefelius, I, 23.)

We shall have more to say about this mysterious circular process. Boehme discovers it in multitudinous forms. In every completed act of the will the soul goes from earth through hell to highest heaven and back to earth again. This is the dialectic of all organic life. Boehme's universe is dramatic to the core for everywhere the two wills endeavor to enact their appointed rôles. Sometimes they fail and the darkness of evil overshadows them. When they succeed, the light of heaven shines. Mysticism, for Boehme, is not alone a mysticism of the Father, the dark transcendental background of all things, nor solely a mysticism of the Son, the luminous goal of nature, but above all a mysticism of the

Spirit, the *life* which eternally pours from one into the other and again returns whence it came.

III. The Two Wills in Eastern and Western Philosophy

Prevailing tendencies in Eastern and Western philosophy will illustrate contrasting attitudes toward the two wills. It is dangerous to generalize too freely regarding such exceedingly complex matters, but our present purpose will not be furthered by a citation of the exceptions which might be enumerated. In general, Western thought follows the philosophy of the expanding will. It tends to reject philosophic systems not primarily interested in understanding or influencing the objective order. It aims at the perfection of the world and society. Only through such action can the individual attain perfection. Nature as a whole is considered to be friendly to man. It will coöperate with him in attaining his ends. We set ourselves to discover what nature wants in order to find out what we ourselves, as part of it, really desire. By immersing ourselves in the immanent law of progress, we are carried on toward final victory. Thus Western thought tends to be optimistic and, though it may, indeed, be melioristic, it seldom dares a thoroughgoing pessimism such as to deprive man of all expectation of final triumph founded on the nature of the world around him. In general it may be said that the West, following the outgoing will, has left the individual behind. It unwittingly conquers nature by submitting to it. This is not only true in social theory which tends to subordinate the individual to society, but also in science. Western mechanistic science cannot even *find* the soul of man for it looks outward, not inward. Physics reduces him to a swarm of electric charges,

chemistry to a few simple elements, and the new psychology to a bundle of reflexes. Geology and astronomy have almost lost him in boundless reaches of space and time. Biology classes him with the "lower" animals, and discovers a law of evolution which sacrifices individual to type. What is man that science is mindful of him? In the universal nexus of cause and effect he nowhere appears. The machines which he has invented to help him require his slavish attention. Sometimes they utterly destroy him as is the case in war. In ruling nature the out-going will has submitted itself to nature, as Rome in conquering Greece submitted to Greek culture.

Eastern philosophy, in general, faces a different way and follows the in-going will. It does not center itself on the control of nature or the perfection of society as such, but on inner control and the perfection of each individual.[13]

This philosophy of the contracting will is pessimistic in respect to external nature. It turns from nature which gives man low ideals of conduct, back to a super-nature at the heart of man whence alone can come ideals that satisfy the deep needs of the self. The in-going will triumphs over the cosmic process by escaping from it, not, like the out-going will, by mingling with it and taking on its tones and colors. In much thought that is typical of the East the knower within is the One Absolute, the only reality. All else is the Known, a fog bank of idea screening the eternal mountain peaks of the Real. Let Western man exhaust himself in struggling with the phantom Nature. Eastern man watches the conflict in quiet contemplation, knowing well that Nature is bound in the end to win. He himself, however, is

[13] Confucius, however, and many of the Chinese moralists aim at perfecting society in accordance with the nature of the world order.

secure, for he has retired to an inner citadel, which Nature cannot invade.

In this bald contrast of Eastern and Western thought, which is far too brief to be fair, much of each which exists in the other has been omitted. The exceptions which might be made to the general trend are not only historically true, they are logically inevitable. Boehme will show us later that each of our two wills is the "matter" or unmanifested substratum of the other and so cannot exist by itself. Each also, by going far enough, passes through a mystical stage which transforms it into the other.

IV. Greek Philosophy and Mysticism

The Greeks made the first great attempt in the Western world to work out a philosophy of the expanding will. They failed because they could not find for it any completely satisfying goal. The result was that the expanding will was arrested in full flight and turned back on itself. Greek Idealism was at first objectively directed. It sought to catch the whole universe in the net of the idea. The knower seeks only that which can be perfectly known, only that which can be thoroughly dissolved in thought, leaving no residuum. The flux presented to our senses is opaque and meaningless and offers no final goal for the mind. Greek philosophy accordingly goes beyond it and finds an ideal world thoroughly transparent to reason. Behind the shadow world of phenomena it found the Light of Reality where thought in its own realm might, with naked eyes, behold truth absolute, unobscured by matter, undarkened by evil. This ideal world was changeless, orderly, symmetrical like a Greek temple. In it the diverse elements of our lower physical existence were purified, idealized and harmonized. But the builders

of this harmonious structure could not fit everything into it. There was an embarrassing refuse pile left over which spoiled the view. This residuum was matter, evil, ugliness, and pain. It was so opaque to reason that the builders declared either that it was devoid of existence or at least that it lacked the full measure of reality. The result was that the Greeks, who sought harmony, discovered a series of unharmonized antinomies such as finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, phenomenal and intelligible, the many and the one. Reason was baffled and retreated to feeling. Neo-Platonism solved the problem of a completely satisfying goal by discovering harmony not only beyond the phenomenal, but even beyond the intelligible. The limit of reason was found to be the negation of reason. The completely ineffable One which reconciles all antinomies could be apprehended only in an ecstasy which seemed "describable," if such a term can be used, more in terms of feeling than in terms of knowledge. The Neo-Platonists thus found a goal for the out-flying will by completing the circle and discovering inner subjective feeling. Outer finality, sought from a purely intellectual starting point, is arrived at through an indescribable inner experience. The effort first made to free the spirit from the shadow world of matter by penetrating to the timeless and spaceless altitudes of reason may purify and redeem, but it does not furnish enough vital air to support life. The soul must therefore return to the world of feeling.

But in falling back to feeling, Greek philosophy does not yet return to earth. Neo-Platonism, particularly its later and more extreme type, did not develop a this-world ethic, but remained facing the other world. In order to explain the character of this negative attitude so prominent in the history of mysticism, we shall resort to a psychological illus-

tration which is intended, however, to be more than a mere analogy. Let us suppose, without doing too much violence to contemporary theories, that a complete movement of the will arises first from the sense world; second, in becoming thought, it is abstracted from that world in an endeavor to harmonize sense data with previous judgments; third, asserting its freedom and ultimate value, the will discharges itself into the sense world again in action. Similarly, Greek philosophy first arose from the sense world of the early Greek sages; second, it became abstracted from that sense world by an apotheosis of the realm of ideas and endeavored to harmonize all things into a coherent system in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Finally, in Neo-Platonism it sought outlet in a feeling of ultimate value, unobservable and incommunicable. It did not seek outlet in action. It did not develop an ethic operative in this world. It stopped at that dim, but profound, apprehension of inner unity and of the ultimate significance of all things which precedes an art of will. The world of ideas might have become a middle term between stimulus and response, but the response was not completed. It was arrested at the ideal stage in Plato and at the deeper and more subjective stage of feeling in subsequent Neo-Platonism. At a later period in this discussion, following Boehme's analysis of the complete process of will, it will be set forth more clearly that there is a moment in that process when the will is thrown back on the Absolute wherein it asserts both its freedom to act and the ultimate worth of its action. This mystical stage is just beyond the rational stage, for intellect by itself cannot discover either freedom or value. Greek philosophy stopped at this point. Accordingly its ethics were based on a release of the soul from the world of matter. This negativity was carried over into Christianity.

It was precisely this quality of arrested action which chiefly characterized the great mystics of the Mediæval Church who followed the Neo-Platonic tradition. Jacob Boehme is sometimes thought to be a disciple of the pseudo-Dionysius to whose influence much of this tradition is due. Boehme, however, followed the will to its completion in action. He passed through but did not stop at that point in the process of the will, discovered by the Neo-Platonists, wherein the soul is baptized in the infinite worth of the ineffable One.

V. Early Christianity and Ethics

The Greeks could not complete the road from the supersensual back to the sensual so they abandoned the sensual, declaring that it lacked a full measure of reality. At this dramatic juncture Deity descends into the sphere of matter and redeems the sensual. Dying Greek intellectualism was confronted by Christianity which appeared at one stroke to solve all its antinomies. Christianity adored a God-man at once finite and infinite, natural and supernatural, who had completely conquered evil and yet could live a normal life in the sensual world. At one period in her history Israel had worshiped both the supernatural ethical Jehovah and the unethical nature-god Baal by identifying the two. Now Christianity, on a far higher plane, combined nature and supernature in a single deified man. The actual existence of a perfect personality in this world solves the problem, for in the ideal person the outer many of nature and the inner one of spirit are reconciled, "The Word is become flesh," cries the exultant writer of the Fourth Gospel. In Jesus the gap between sensual and supersensual has been bridged and on this bridge the whole world may travel to salvation.

Yet early Christianity stopped short of a complete solu-

tion. Instead of teaching that every man might become an ideal person in whom antinomies are wholly reconciled it tended to inculcate loyalty to one such Person. It is true that its greatest leaders and all its mystics have seen further than this. Saint Paul and Saint John taught a mystic union with Christ, the vine of which all believers are branches. In this union Christ's personality was shared. Christianity was, as Paul expressed it, the "putting on of Christ." Faith meant more than intellectual acceptance or loyal orientation of will. The law of Moses takes us that far. In the new religion, according to Saint Paul, followers of Jesus may be crucified and raised up with Him and so partake of His perfection. Nevertheless, in spite of the positive mysticism of Paul and John and many of the early Fathers, Christian thought crystallized into a type of arrested action. The average believer looked to Jesus, his ideal, across a great chasm which only the Apocalypse could bridge.

Early Christianity can be analyzed more adequately in terms of ethics than in terms of Greek metaphysics. In terms of ethics the negative in-going will may be said to have an other-world end. The positive out-going will, being assertive and seeking an all-inclusive life, may be said to have a this-world end. The "other-world" end, reached through self-renunciation, is the religious end in the usual sense of the term, and the this-world end is a unification of all the various this-world ends arising from man's physical and psychical nature. Man's ethical task appears to be to unite as far as possible the this-world end and the other-world end into a single end which shall satisfy both the desire for self-assertion and the desire for self-renunciation. Can the supernatural and transcendent be combined with the natural and immanent?

In the person of Jesus it was demonstrated that an other-world morality of self-renunciation was not incompatible with a this-world morality of social human relations. The Neo-Platonist had reached the supersensible by fleeing from the world, Jesus had attained it by living in the world and yet overcoming it. Jesus is both worldly and other-worldly. He constantly expresses indifference to wealth and poverty, church and state and all mundane preoccupations. "Take ye no thought for the morrow," "Resist not evil," "Blessed are the meek," are apparently the statements of a self-renouncing ascetic. In His dealings with the Pharisees He emphasizes subjective dispositions, the form and not the content of the will. Love is the door to the Kingdom. Yet Jesus obviously did not teach merely a Kantian subjective formal ethic. The Kingdom of God which was to come was to be a new human society on this earth, a community in which men were to treat one another as sons of a common Father. Only by living as if that Kingdom were here already could men bring it about. Jesus gives us little specific information about His objective this-world end. He is, however, very definite in saying that the many different this-world ends in the world around us must be unified and harmonized by the dominance of the other-world end. Jesus faces the other world in order to bring about a new world here. The absolute other-world code of "offering the other cheek" takes precedence over the relative this-world code of an "eye for an eye." But Jesus does not abolish the this-world ethic of Moses. He fulfills it; that is to say, the lower law of this world attains its own ends not through itself, but through the higher law of the spirit. Modern Christianity is confused because it does not know how to accept the ethics of the Kingdom and at the same time live a normal

human life. Such mystics as Boehme undertake to solve this problem. To the earliest followers of Jesus the riddle was not so serious. They expected the Kingdom shortly to appear in the clouds of heaven. The other-world ethics of Jesus prepared them for the new order which was about to come in actuality through some giant catastrophe.

This duality of natural and supernatural which Jesus overcame in His own life, but had not harmonized in any explicit system of thought had serious consequences for Christianity. The same difficulty was faced by the successors of Plato as by the followers of Jesus. Platonic ideas were both transcendent and immanent. In this they were like the Kingdom of Heaven which was in the world, but not of it.

The "Realm of Ideas" and the "Kingdom of Heaven" had, therefore, similar careers for similar reasons. The Kingdom rose out of the homely precepts propounded by Jesus regarding everyday life, even as the divine Ideas were first discovered by Socrates in the streets of Athens. The Kingdom illumined all things with divine radiance in visions of Saint John and Saint Paul and the early Greek Fathers, just as the Ideas illumined the sensual world of Plato and Aristotle. Finally in Catholicism and Protestantism the Kingdom fled as far away as the One of the Neo-Platonists. In Catholicism the Kingdom was outside the world except at those points where the Church could bring it within reach through sacraments, and in Protestantism it was removed to the life hereafter and left its only revelation for mankind within a Book.

That which in Socrates and Jesus began as an ethical principle operative in this world, in Neo-Platonism and Luther was incapable of being presented in any experience which had a this-world significance. In Neo-Platonism the ineffable

One was reached by carrying negation to the farthest limit in this life. In Protestantism the negation was even more determined, for Pilgrim must cross the dark river of death before he could enter the Celestial City.[14]

Let us trace in more detail the fate of the ethics of the Kingdom.

VI. Catholicism Offers a Limited Solution

Catholicism early developed an ethic of nature distinct from an ethic of super-nature through its attempt to preach the primitive Christian doctrine of world renunciation and at the same time to adapt itself to this world. Since Greek thought dominated the ancient world, the natural this-world ethics had a Greek basis while the supernatural other-world ethics had what was intended to be a Christian basis. The first grew out of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic views which emphasized the immanence rather than the transcendence of the world of forms and so accepted the concept of a natural ethical law fixed in nature. This law regulated the political and economic system, as well as science, philosophy, and art. It was a combination of Aristotle, the Old Testament, and popular and traditional elements. It accepted "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and its ideal was the Aristotelian high-minded man, well balanced, practical, worldly, prosperous.

The supernatural code faced the other way. Its goal was

[14] Thus Boehme states the difficulty in Protestantism. "I have sought through many masters of writing, hoping to find in them the Pearl of the ground of man, but I could find nothing of that for which my soul longed. I only found many conflicting opinions. . . . With all this my soul became very unquiet within me and was full of anguish as a woman in travail. I found nothing until I followed the words of Christ when he said 'You must be born anew if you will see the Kingdom of God.' This at first stopped my heart for I supposed that such a thing could not be done in this world, but only at my departure from this life." (T. P. 10:1.)

complete renunciation of the world and all its works. It grew out of the Sermon on the Mount, Pauline theology, and the Neo-Platonic view of nature as evil. It regulated certain aspects of private life, the communication of grace through sacraments, the subordination of the natural law to the ends of the Church, and the asceticism of the saints. It believed the most perfect creature to be only natural. Christianity lifts such a one above his natural limitations to God's super-nature through the Church and its sacraments. The Gospel was a gift from God, a divine bestowment which endowed man with liberty and freed him from the dominance of the external.

Monasticism arose as a genuine and sincere solution of the predicament presented by the double ethical standard, for it seemed that only within an artificially ideal community could the world renunciation of Jesus' teaching be carried out. It preserved and emphasized the all-important principle that the Kingdom of God could (at least in some sense) be realized on earth as a present temporal reality. Here it agrees with mysticism. The mystics of the Middle Ages came in most instances from monasteries, oblivious though they seem to have been of the fact that their very mysticism contained a principle which must eventually dispense with both church and monastery.

Thus Catholicism recognizes both the this-world and the other-world elements in Christ's teaching, but it does not attempt to reconcile them in a single individual experience. Instead it designates some persons for the religious end, in contemplative renunciation of the world, and others, according to their gifts, to various human ends. The man of the world is forced to subordinate his Christianity to the necessities of his occupation, but he is not thereby lost. The

Church is an organism of many related parts and this man can therefore, through the Church, share in the virtue of those who follow the path of self-renunciation. The Church's solution was logically elaborated on practical lines, but it is difficult to believe that Jesus meant the Sermon on the Mount for a special class of persons. The "sick soul," to use William James' phrase, wants a unification of his divided inner life here and now. He is unwilling that the monk or priest should monopolize the other-world ends while he is forced for the sake of a paltry competence to follow a lower standard.

VII. Protestantism Postpones the Solution

Protestantism rebelled at the complete monopoly of the other-world religious end by the Church. It accordingly took this end away from the Church and tried for a time to live with it. But not for long. The reconciliation of this world and the other world appeared impracticable in the ordinary affairs of life. So Protestantism banished the other world, not to a monastery, but to the life hereafter. It thus attempted to solve the dualism by abolishing one of the terms. In its rediscovery of the inner life Protestantism existed at first as a form of mysticism. For many years before the Reformation there had been growing up, generally unperceived, though occasionally coming to the surface, a non-ecclesiastical and sometimes anti-ecclesiastical religion. Such mysticism as that of Eckhart and Tauler, of Suso and Ruysbroeck, speculative as it was and tinged with scholasticism, had gradually assumed a practical character and had developed into praying circles and pious associations, such as "The Eleven Thousand Virgins," the "Gottesfreunde," and the "Brethren of the Common Life." In these

movements the spiritual ancestry of Jacob Boehme can be traced.

It is, however, wrong to suppose that in them the ancestry of Protestantism, as finally developed, can be traced. Protestantism has even less place for mysticism than has Catholicism. It might appear that Luther's inspiration came from breathing the air of German mysticism. As a young man he was much impressed by the mysticism of St. Augustine. He bought and elaborately annotated an edition of Tauler, and edited a mystical manuscript called *The Frankfurter,* to which he gave the name of *The German Theology.* As to the influence of this mysticism his two hundred or more biographers vociferously disagree. The most plausible explanation is given by Bohmer (*Luther, pp.* 103-11), who says that Luther got from Tauler and the Frankfurter the doctrine "that every man whom God saves must pass through the hell of pangs of conscience" and "that man has no other alternative than to give himself up to God for life and death and to wholly relinquish all idea of personal choice." If this be true, Luther adopted the negative elements of mysticism, its humility and self-surrender, rather than the positive element of direct contact with God himself. In 1520 Luther branded the pseudo-Dionysius, who was one of the inspirers of the German theology as "most pernicious, more a follower of Plato than of Christ."

To ascertain the true spirit of that Protestantism on the background of which Boehme's philosophy evolved, we must turn, not to the mystical sects of the early Reformation which Protestantism itself repudiated through relentless persecution, nor to the revived scholasticism of Melanchthon and Zwingli who tried to make their Protestantism reasonable, but to the conception of faith. The doctrines regarding faith

and Scripture were the two organizing ideas of the Reformation. The *subjective* element of Protestantism was faith, an attitude, an orientation in which the soul throws itself wholly on the mercy of God. The *objective* element was the Scripture which contained all that could ever be known in this life about God and salvation. "To this Scripture," says the *Westminster Confession of Faith,* "nothing may be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit or by the traditions of men." The natural depraved man could, through faith, face toward truth, but he could not, of himself, reach it.

The difficulties in such a conception are obvious, for there is no path from the subjective to the objective. The two are in water-tight compartments. We have here a kind of religious naïve-realism and the corresponding difficulty of formulating any test of truth. By what standard shall I, who am but a child of nature and therefore totally depraved, judge which is correct of two interpretations of Scripture by Luther and Zwingli, for instance? The Biblical test reduces all to pure phenomenalism. A comparison of symbols can tell us nothing of the accuracy of the symbols. But the difficulty goes deeper. As man is "natural" and totally depraved with no faculty for truth, can truth have meaning for him? Or if he can only acquire goodness by a process taking place wholly outside himself, a kind of bargaining between the persons of the Trinity, must not evil also be out of relation to him? Even "faith" can be no form of goodness. Man is not immoral but unmoral, a conclusion practically acknowledged in the doctrine of predestination.

A conspicuous achievement of Protestantism was the abolition of the Catholic concept of sacraments. The sacraments permit a mystic union of God and man through the Church, but Protestantism admits no mystic union of any

kind. The Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy of the Church had room for mystic participation in a transcendental realm. The theory of this participation was derived from Plato's conception of a participation of the soul in the realm of ideas. Protestantism so widened scholastic dualism that the divine supernatural term is pushed clear out of the world, leaving this world wholly evil.[15] The result was that Protestantism, though at first, through its doctrine of faith, it appeared to favor individualism, was compelled to revert to authority even more than was the case with Catholicism, "for," says McGiffert, "there was not the same consciousness of strength in the divided churches of the Reformation as in the one great body of the Middle Ages." [16]

As Protestantism had only this world to deal with it was forced to adopt this-world's ethics. The Sermon on the Mount, which Catholicism had endeavored to keep at least in its monasteries and religious orders, was abandoned and a morality of law, an Old Testament code was substituted. The mystical sects of the Reformation period, loosely classified under the general name of Anabaptists, who often took literally Christ's injunction to "resist not evil" were savagely persecuted. In the Thirty Years' War the God of Battles was invoked, and in the hands of Cromwell the "Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" smote the "Philistines." New Testament ethics, the ethics of the Kingdom, have on the whole been ignored by Protestantism down to the present day. The completeness of this inherent dualism means that the domination of all other ends by the religious end can

[15] William Blake in a note to Cellini's *Trattato della Pittura* expresses the same conception in the phrase: "The Pope supposes nature and the Virgin Mary to be the same allegorical personages, but the Protestant considers nature incapable of bearing a child."

[16] *Rise of Modern Religious Ideas,* p. 12.

be reached only after death in a heaven where even the possibility of evil is excluded.

VIII. Protestant and Catholic Mysticism

Let us define the supernatural religious object as the goal of the in-going will of the religious mystic and the whole group of natural human ends, unified as far as possible, as the goal of the out-going will. The supernatural religious object is the Absolute God, and the this-world human ends are truth, justice, happiness, and whatever may be considered as belonging to an ideal social order. The problem then is to reconcile the two wills by giving them a common goal, that is, to show how the will of God, found by the renunciation of human desire, can be objectified in a social order. This is the problem of the Incarnation as set forth in the Gospel of John. How can spirit in its perfection tabernacle in mortal flesh? Christianity showed how, in a single case, spirit and matter became reconciled. Greek philosophy had worked out a theory of immanence which early Christianity attempted to use in explaining, not only the one complete Incarnation, but also the many incomplete incarnations among the followers of Jesus. But the negative tendencies in Greek philosophy prevailed. The dualism was wider in Catholicism than in early Greek Christianity. Through the grace of God spirit tabernacled in flesh, but only in special instances. This grace was made possible through the Church. Protestantism rejected the Church's control of grace, but found itself even less able to work out a theory which could reconcile this world and the other world. It accordingly widened the dualism still further and attempted to make the best of a this-world legalism.

To both these somewhat divergent points of view mysti-

cism replies that the Incarnation is possible in the heart of every believer and that the resultant ethic is such as Christ preached in the Sermon on the Mount. Only as the other world and this world are reconciled inwardly here and now will the Kingdom of God come outwardly. When in the days of Cromwell the "Fifth Monarchy Men" were disturbing London in their excitement over the expected coming of the Kingdom from the clouds of heaven, George Fox, the first Quaker, told them that the Kingdom had come already and had "dashed to pieces the four monarchies."

Mysticism unites the objective grace of Catholicism with the subjective faith of Protestantism in a single experience, which is the union of the soul with God. As Catholicism is primarily objective and Protestantism primarily subjective, mysticism whether Catholic or Protestant is subjective-objective. Or, stated in categorical terms,

(1) Catholicism makes the supernatural religious object exterior and attainable.

(2) Protestantism makes the supernatural religious object exterior and unattainable.

(3) Mysticism makes the supernatural religious object interior and attainable.

Since mysticism is both Catholic and Protestant and our present object is to define the task of Protestant mysticism, we must distinguish between the two. The difference is largely in the fact that Catholic mysticism tended to be orthodox and Protestant mysticism did not. The latter accordingly became the precursor of modern philosophy while the former was more closely bound up with mediævalism. Catholic mysticism could be orthodox because the philosophy of the church was Greek in origin. Lehmann [17]

[17] *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom,* p. 145.

picturesquely styles it "Mysticism which the church long ago borrowed from Plato, but which in the course of time had been re-baptized and re-inaugurated so many times that it required sharp eyes to detect its heathen derivation." Catholicism had turned to Greek intellectualism rather than to Augustinian voluntarism because the Church, being universal, is therefore real (according to this logic) and is the ladder reaching up to the Platonic heaven. It extends from the visible and perishable particular to the invisible and eternal universal. Thus Platonism, by declaring that the most abstract is the most real, had set the Catholic mystic on the famous *via negativa.* On this road, God, the universal of universals, is reached by subtracting all particulars contributed by the senses. The most abstract has no other positive quality than that of unity, the abstraction of all abstractions. As the mystic mounted upward toward the One, particularity and multiplicity, and with them the whole world of the senses, were left behind.

Protestant mysticism on the other hand was compelled to evolve a philosophy of its own. Because of this contingency it became the ancestor of modern philosophy. Luther had posited a radical evil over against God; he had also maintained that the ultimate individuality of man must not be merged and lost in any Platonic abstraction. Through him Protestant mysticism was committed to the preservation of both terms of the antinomy. Subjective man must not be merged in objective Church or lost in objective God. Protestant mysticism stands therefore as the true precursor of the self-assertive modern age, committed not to accepting the universe, but to transforming it according to the subjective will. Such mysticism is at once active and passive. This fact explains the fundamental difference between Cath-

olic Eckhart and Protestant Boehme, thinkers who are often classed together because they are superficially alike. Protestant mysticism, being the more subjective, explores deeper into the self than does reason and finds will as the furthest reach of introspection. Hence Protestant mysticism makes will rather than idea ultimate. It tends to be irrational and dualistic, for the activity of will depends on the duality of reality and value. Creation arises, not from logical, but moral necessity. God is Person as well as Truth. Metaphysics is here based on ethics, whereas the ethics of the Church was based on metaphysics. Creation becomes an evolution, not a devolution. The early Church mystics in their theories of creation began at the top and worked through a series of deteriorating stages, emanations, or radiations all the way down to negative matter. Boehme works from formless matter upward and is thus a prophet of modern science. For the Church, love was submission to the upward pull of the ideal. "Contemplation," says Thomas Aquinas, "is Love." For Boehme love is creative force.

The controversy over the primacy of will or intellect did not arise with the Reformation. It was the source of debate between Thomism and Scotism. Modern psychology disregards the distinction, holding that will and intellect are inseparable aspects of mental activity. But pragmatically there is some importance in a distinction which has practical consequences. The Church detected that the primacy of the intellect was conducive to orthodoxy. It officially adopted Thomism. If will is dependent on ideas and ideas are furnished by the Church, all is safe and sane. If idea is dependent on will, heresy and anarchy result, as the multitude of Reformation sects plainly demonstrated. Will, said the Church, is obviously lower in rank than intellect, for will

can only act by picking out the particular, and therefore imperfect, realizations of the universal Good.

Protestant mysticism therefore presents a more genuine dualism to be bridged than the Church's dualism between philosophy and dogma, which both partook, though in different degrees, of the Ideal realm. The Protestant emphasis on faith and the essential interiority and subjectivity of religion must be kept as a positive gain, yet the religious object, as in Catholicism, must have present and immediate reality. Protestant mysticism must recognize both the reality of evil and the omnipotence of God, the interiority of goodness and the objectivity of grace, the dualism of value and the monism of the Divine Will. The other-world ethics of renunciation must be possible in an egoistic world. Egoistic desire must somehow be satisfied with altruistic result. The Protestant mystic could not, like the monks and mystics of the Middle Ages, escape the awful consequence of the finite and "fly hence to our dear country," nor could he like other Protestants postpone the divine harmony of the Kingdom to a choir hereafter. To reconcile the two terms of the antinomy, to create peace founded on strife, harmony which included discord, a One which was also many, seemed to Jacob Boehme in his years of despair a superhuman task. Such indeed it was, but the light finally broke through and revealed the manner of union between the in-going will toward the Oneness of God and the out-going will toward the many of nature.[18]

[18] For *German Idealism and Boehme's Problem* see Appendix, p. 259.

In life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world—a world too that was fit
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude,* Bk. XIII.

CHAPTER II

BOEHME'S LIFE AND INFLUENCE

THE outer circumstances of Boehme's life bear little direct relation to his inner struggles. He was born in 1575 at Alt Seidenberg, a village near Görlitz in Silesia.[1] His parents, Jacob and Ursula, were of poor but solid peasant stock. They gave him the usual village school education. At an early age he was sent to the fields with other children to herd cattle. His peculiar psychic temperament and vivid imagination soon became evident. As a shepherd boy he climbed to the top of the neighboring "Landeskrone" and there beheld a vaulted entrance leading into a cavern. On entering he found a great vessel filled with money from which he ran away in fright. Afterwards he often returned to the spot with other boys, but the cave and its treasure had vanished. His biographer Frankenberg, to whose account we owe the incident, finds in it an omen of Boehme's "spiritual entrance into the hidden treasury of divine and natural wisdom."

Jacob Boehme was a dreamy, thoughtful stripling, ill-quali-

[1] Boehme's first and principal biographer was his friend Abraham von Frankenberg, whose *Bericht,* dated 1651, is printed in the first editions of Boehme's works (1682, 1715 and 1730) along with a number of brief biographical documents written by other disciples. (English translation by Okeley, 1780.) These reports, however, contain an obvious mythological element arising out of the passionate devotion of the writers to their master. Boehme's epistles are the most trustworthy sources of biographical information. They disagree at some points with the accounts of his disciples. The tercentenary memorial volume published by the city of Görlitz (R. Jecht. Görlitz, 1924) contains a quantity of new, but not very important biographical material from the city archives.

fied to become an agriculturist so he was apprenticed to a shoemaker. Soon the lad experienced another portent of his future. A stranger with "light-flashing eyes" came into the shop. "Jacob," he said, with a piercing glance, "thou art little, but thou shalt become great so that the world will wonder at thee. Thou must endure much misery and poverty and suffer persecution, but be courageous and strong for God loves and is gracious unto thee." The result of this and other apparently subjective experiences was that Jacob made such a nuisance of himself in exhorting his fellow apprentices to godliness that his master dismissed him on the sufficient grounds that he wanted a shoemaker and not a "house prophet." Then, probably between the years 1592 and 1595, he wandered over Germany as a traveling journeyman. Little is known of this period, but it was undoubtedly crowded with experiences which later found expression in books. Boehme was deeply distressed by the sufferings of his countrymen and by the bitter contentions of princes. A profound hatred of war took possession of his soul. Being a devout churchgoer he discovered that the Evangelical Church was split into wrangling factions which consigned each other to damnation. Henceforth to him the established Church was *"Babel und Fabel"* (M. M. 51:49), more representative of the devil than of Christ. Afflicted with melancholy and oppressed with doubt, he earnestly sought a guiding light. Sometimes he found it in a stray bit of alchemistic or Kaballistic lore. More often it shone out from within himself. Once, says Frankenberg, he was lifted into a "sabbath of the soul" and for seven days was "enrapt in the highest divine vision and joy."

About 1595 he returned to Görlitz, became a master shoemaker, and married Katherina Kuntzschmann, a tradesman's

daughter, with whom he lived in happy union for thirty years. She bore him four sons. Frankenberg describes a second, more famous vision to which we have already alluded. It probably occurred about 1600. Boehme's glance was attracted by a polished pewter dish which reflected the sun. Suddenly a strange feeling overpowered him for it seemed as if he were looking into the very heart of nature and beholding its innermost mystery. Startled and desiring to banish such presumptuous thoughts, he went out on the green. The vision persisted and became even more clear. The grass and flowers were stirred with strange living forces. Over nature the veil of matter grew thin and half revealed the vast struggling life beneath. He told no one but continued in faithful application to his trade, wondering what this mysterious revelation might mean.

During the next twelve years Boehme lived outwardly a simple God-fearing life. Trade must have prospered, for in 1610 the town records show that he purchased a new house at an important street intersection near the Neisse bridge. Inwardly, however, he suffered painful travail while the new philosophy was slowly coming to birth.

We have an account in Boehme's own words of his experiences at this period of his life. He says:

> I fell into great melancholy and sadness when I beheld the mighty deep of this world with its stars and clouds, rain and snow . . . for I saw evil and good, love and anger in all things, in the earth and its elements as well as in man and beast. I considered also that little spark of light, man, and what he might be worth before God in comparison to this great fabric of heaven and earth. Finding that in this world it goes as well with the wicked as with the virtuous, I was exceedingly troubled. The scriptures could not comfort me though I knew them well. Often the devil would give me heathenish thoughts about which I will be silent. In this affliction I raised up my spirit, of which I then understood little or nothing,

toward God with a mighty assault and wrapped up my whole heart and soul together with my thought and will in the resolution to struggle with the love and mercy of God without ceasing until he blessed me. . . . And when in my zeal I stormed so hard on God and all the gates of hell, as if my life depended on it, and I had still left some reserves of strength, suddenly at a violent assault my spirit burst through the gates of hell into the innermost birth of Deity and there I was embraced with love as a bridegroom embraces his bride. What this triumph of the spirit was I cannot express. I can compare it with nothing except with the birth of life in the midst of death. It was like the resurrection from the dead. In this Light my spirit saw through all things and into all creatures and I recognized God in grass and plants. Then I had a great impulse to describe the Being of God, but as I could not at once grasp with my reason His profound births in their essence, a year passed before I received true understanding. It was with me as with a young tree planted in the ground, at first it is young and tender and pleasant to the sight, but it does not bear. Though it blossoms the blossoms fall off. Many a cold wind and frost and snow shall pass over it before it bears its fruit.[2]

This tree of Boehme's philosophy slowly grew through summers of increase and winters of darkness and depression. The moments of vision which alternated with the periods of doubt gradually became more luminous. "The first fire," he says, "was but a glimmer, not a lasting light. Many a wind blew upon it, but it never went out." [3]

I was obliged [he says in a letter to Caspar Lindner, customs collector at Beuthen] to work out this great mystery like a child going to school. I could clearly see it as in a great depth for I looked through as into a chaos where all lies undeveloped, but the unraveling of it was impossible. It opened itself within me from time to time like a growing thing. I was pregnant with it for twelve years and experienced a violent impulse to bring it out into expression. Finally it overwhelmed me like a cloud-burst, what it strikes it strikes. Whatever I could grasp sufficiently to bring into outwardness that I wrote down.[4]

[2] *Aurora,* Chap. 19. [3] *Aurora,* 19. [4] Ep. 12:9-10.

This statement applies to the year 1612, the turning point of Boehme's life. Here he steps out from the narrow circle of tradesman acquaintances to the society of the great and learned. The *Aurora* was composed in this "cloud-burst" of literary effort, lest the fleeting visions be forgotten. In his letters Boehme apologizes for his book on the grounds that it was merely a memorandum not intended for eyes other than his own. He writes to Abraham von Sommerfeld in 1620 (Ep. 10:2):

> It was written by a single hand with no skill or great understanding, but only in that knowledge which is God's gift. Its author never intended that it should come into the hands of great people. He wrote it only as a memorial for himself and as a means of comfort when he was asleep in the flesh.

In a later letter (1621) (Ep. 18:13) he calls the *Aurora* "my childish beginning not carried out far enough and in need of explanation." "I thought," he says, "to keep it by me but it was taken away and broadcast without my will." A nobleman, Karl von Endern, who had come under the influence of Schwenkfeld's writings, chanced to see the manuscript in Boehme's shop and became interested in it. Securing permission to take it home, he read it with enthusiasm and had several copies made. These and the original were distributed widely and Boehme did not see his book again for three years. (Ep. 12:13.) It lacked thirty sheets of being complete and was never finished. A copy came to the attention of Gregorius Richter, pastor primarius of Görlitz. On a Sunday morning in July, 1613, Boehme sat meekly in church in his usual pew. The pastor gave forth a text on false prophets and then, singling out the astonished shoemaker, directed toward him such a tirade of violent abuse as would have been possible only in that era of theological

polemic and religious bitterness. The whole city was consigned to the abyss of Hell unless it should cast out the author of this treatise. The humiliated victim waited at the door at the close of the service and humbly asked his persecutor wherein he had offended. "Away from me, Satan," screamed the pastor, "off to Hell with your disturbances. Have you come to insult me?" The next day the magistrates, overawed by Richter, brought Boehme before them and ordered him to leave town. He meekly replied, "Dear sirs, since it cannot be otherwise I am content." He asked permission to see his family, but this was refused and he was led outside the walls. After a night of reflection the council regained its courage and the next day Boehme was brought back and honorably reinstated in the city. This version of the incident appears in an account by Boehme's friend and disciple, Dr. Cornelius Weissner.[5] It differs from the record in the diary of the Burgermeister, the famous Bartholomaus Scultetus,[6] who states simply that

> on the 26th of July, 1613, Jacob Boehme, a shoemaker living between the gates behind the hospital smithy, was summoned to the Rathaus for punishment and asked about his enthusiastic opinions. Thereupon he was put in prison and as soon as his book, written in quarto, was brought from his house by Oswald Krause, he was released from confinement and warned to cease from such matters.

At a second trial before the town council in 1624 Boehme said that he had after this earlier trial given his promise to

[5] Weissner does not date this entry and it may refer to the second persecution in 1624. In either case it disagrees with the Görlitz records.

[6] Jecht, *Die Lebensumstände Jacob Böhmes,* p. 36. Scultetus was a student of Paracelsus and of the Kabbala and entertained famous Alchemists in his house. Copies made by him (1564-67) of several Paracelsian writings are preserved in Görlitz. He should have had more sympathy with Boehme, but perhaps he was too old (he was seventy-two) to attempt to unravel the *Aurora.*

Richter to write no more.[7] "I did not," he explained, "understand God's way nor what he wished to do with me." He added that a promise made in return by Richter, that attacks from the pulpit would cease, had not been kept, but were so continued that he and his family had become objects of ridicule throughout the city.

Boehme's letters written during the next five years show how he struggled to keep his promise.

> I was timid [he says] and the light of Grace was for a time withdrawn and glimmered in me as a hidden fire, which was outwardly foolishness but inwardly a burning force. (*feuriger Trieb*) (Ep. 12:13.)
>
> I have implored the spirit of God a hundred times that my knowledge might not serve for his honor and the betterment of my brothers; that he would take it from me and hold me only in his love, but I have found that with all my prayers I have only kindled the fire the more. (Ep. 12:16.)

In the meantime manuscript copies of the *Aurora* were circulated widely and many new friends, among them physicians, chemists, noblemen, and liberal clergymen visited the shoemaker's shop by the Neisse bridge. Dr. Tobias Kober, a Paracelsian physician, moved to Görlitz in 1613 and became a devout disciple of Jacob Boehme. The scholarly and far-traveled Balthasar Walter, hearing of Boehme's fame, spent three months in his house. These and other learned doctors furnished Boehme with a number of Latin terms which he afterward used with meanings of his own to the further confounding of an already confused vocabulary. His friends, however, performed a real service in persuading him to write again. In his defence before the council in 1624 Boehme relates how this came about:

[7] *Libellus Apologeticus* 6.

In spite of the pastor primarius my book was loaned in strange places, cities and villages and copied and spread abroad but without my knowledge or desire. Many learned men both priests and doctors as well as nobles, counts and princes, corresponded with me and some of them sought me out in person and demanded more of my gifts and knowledge. This I dared not give for it was forbidden by the pastor primarius. But they showed me that God would take away my talent and give it to him who could use it, and that God should be obeyed rather than man. This I considered and I implored God day and night that he would do with me what he willed. Finally the divine gift was renewed and kindled into a great and heavenly light. (*Libellus apologeticus,* 7-8.)

In 1618 Boehme began to write again and produced book after book [8] with marvelous rapidity until his death in 1624. Sixty-six of his letters written during this period have been preserved. They indicate feverish activity. "The burning fire," he writes, "drives me on so swiftly that the pen cannot follow." (Ep. 10:45.) There is much talk of conferences with like-minded philosophers in widely scattered places. At least a third of Boehme's time appears to have been spent in this way. Sometimes he was much displeased with the extravagance of his entertainment. "Wines and costly spices," he writes, "hide the Pearl of the Kingdom." (Ep. 15:6.)

Several years before this Boehme had given up shoemaking. A town record at Görlitz states that he sold his cobbler's bench on March 12, 1613.[9] After that he traded in yarns

[8] For a list of Boehme's thirty works with dates see Appendix. They cover much the same ground. Partial exceptions to this are the *Forty Questions,* the *Four Complexions* and the controversial pieces written against Tilken (1621) and against Stiefel and Meth (1621). The *Forty Questions Concerning the Soul* (1620) were proposed by Dr. Balthasar Walter and answered by Boehme. The *Four Complexions* (1621) is a "book for the melancholy." It contains a keen psychological analysis of the various dangers in the "four temperaments" and the means of meeting them. In Chapter VI of the present study I have outlined the development of Boehme's thought as shown in his books.

[9] Jecht, p. 25.

and woolen goods, making yearly journeys to Prague. Times were hard, however, and the family at home suffered poverty as well as persecution. He writes from Dresden to Dr. Kober asking him to comfort his wife and to say that he will continue to provide for her and the children. (Ep. 61.) Philosophy yielded no money and Katherina Boehme was compelled to eke out the family income by trading on her own account. There is, however, occasional mention in the letters of payment for the loan of manuscripts (Ep. 9:1) or for permission to copy them (Ep. 51:1). Karl von Endern, in whose castle at Leopoldshain Boehme did some writing (Ep. 2:11), sent him gifts of food, as did a few other wealthy friends. (Ep. 5:2; 6:1; 21:4; 32:2; 33:6.)

In March, 1624, without Boehme's knowledge or consent, two of his shorter writings were published by his disciple, the Silesian nobleman von Schweinitz.[10] Four others were later added to these and the whole collection was printed in one volume entitled *Christosophia* or *The Way to Christ.* This was the only publication of Boehme's work during his lifetime. He writes to his friend von Schweinitz that the wrath of his arch enemy Richter had flared up as never before.

> When I came home from your house [he says], I found Satan's bed made wherein he would have had me lie, had not God prevented it through noble pious hearts. For the chief Pharisee, the pastor primarius, ran often to the chief men of our city and raged mightily with lies about me and cried out against me and demanded that as soon as I came home I should be cast into prison and driven out of the city. So he lodged a lying complaint before the council and thus Hell was hot and ready for me.
>
> But after most of the council had read my little printed book they

[10] So says the decree of the Görlitz town council. The book, however, gives the credit to von Frankenberg.

found nothing unchristian in it and some even were much pleased with it. No true cause for such persecution was found in me, and the demands of the Primarius were judged unjust.

The council advised Boehme to avoid further trouble by living elsewhere and to this he readily agreed. Though he made plans to move from the city (Ep. 53:13, 61:5, 64:17), he remained in Görlitz and the struggle with the Primarius waxed continually hotter. Richter published a series of verses in bad Latin accusing Jacob Boehme of being the Antichrist. He pedantically argues that Boehme's writings "smack of shoemakers' pitch," and that "Whereas Christ was anointed with oil by the Holy Spirit the shoemaker is anointed with offal by the Devil." He proceeds with the taunt that "Christ drank good wine, whereas the shoemaker drinks whisky." In his reply (*Schutzrede wider Gregor. Richtern* Apr. 10, 1624) Boehme answers the pastor point by point in gentle and loving reproof. In a letter to Dr. Kober (June 13, 1624) he says of Richter, "He is but a fiery flash of God's anger which must be quenched with divine love and humility; we must in no way add fuel to make it burn." (Ep. 64:5.) Richter's persecution served to make Boehme better known. "The enemy means evil, but he nevertheless spreads abroad my talent." (Ep. 58:12.) But Katherina Boehme continued to suffer. In a letter to Dr. Kober her husband asks him to cheer her. He insists that she must not be compelled to put up window shutters to avoid torment from the people. Through such petty persecution "could the fruit of the High Priest be seen." (Ep. 61.)

For some time Boehme had had an invitation to visit certain learned men in Dresden. (Ep. 50:7.) Early in May, 1624, he journeyed thither for a sojourn of two months. By this time he was a well-known figure. His teachings had been

"sounded through Europe" as he expresses it. (Ep. 50:7.) He had boasted two years before (Ep. 34:15) that his writings were read "far and wide with zest by many learned doctors, by noblemen, and by persons of high and low degree and were copied down entirely without urging on my part." In Dresden he was the guest of great men of the city. The director of the royal laboratory, the famous Benedict Hinckelmann, was his host. At dinners and at various conferences he met high officers of the Elector's court, many of whom were acquainted with his writings and were highly pleased with the opportunity of conversing with him. The letters written to Kober from Dresden (Ep. 61, 62, 63, 64) give a fairly complete account of this visit. They make no reference to an examination for heresy which his biographers agree in attributing to this period. On Whitsunday he dined with the *Haus-Marschall,* the three Herrn von Schwalbach, the master of the horse, the chief chamberlain, and a councillor, all of whom were delighted with his conversation and begged for further intercourse. (Ep. 63:2.) They admired his little book which they had brought to the attention of the Elector. The Thursday following he went to the castle of a formidable potentate *"der Wohl-Edle Gestrenge Herr Joachim von Loss, Kaiserl. Majest. und Churfürstl. Geheimer Rath und Reichs-Officire,"* who promised to be his patron and offered him rest from persecution and an opportunity to develop his talents. Through this and other visits, some of them to famous theologians, Boehme came to feel that he was on the crest of the wave. He wrote to Kober that, as Richter is attempting to drive from Görlitz all who read his little book, perhaps he may desire to come to Dresden and drive out the Elector, his councillors and preachers. Our philosopher dreamed of fulfilling his great mission of

quickening to new life the dry bones of the Protestant church.

> I hope now [he writes] (Ep. 63:9) that the time of the new Reformation will soon come when the children of Christ will not be called "shoemakers' blacking."

In an earlier letter he says:

> You shall yet hear wonderful things, for the time of the Reformation is born of which it was told me three years since by a vision. (Ep. 58:13.)

What great things this new Luther of a profounder Reformation might have accomplished we shall never know for his end was near. In six years Boehme had increased rapidly in ability and influence. It is possible that if he had lived a decade longer he might have instituted a new and important movement within the Church. On the other hand the Richters of Germany might have overpowered him. Only in such an atmosphere of political and religious freedom as that of the English Commonwealth could his ideas finally come into their own.

In November, 1624, four months after his return from Dresden, he fell ill at the house of his friend, von Schweinitz. He at once hurried home to Görlitz. One night on his sick bed he spoke of hearing beautiful music. As morning approached, he smilingly bade farewell to his family and with the words, "Now I go hence into Paradise," he departed.

His enemy Richter had died shortly before, but the antagonistic spirit persisted and the clergy at first refused to officiate at his burial. Through the intervention of the governor, they were finally prevailed upon to perform this duty. Richter's immediate successor feigned illness, but a subordi-

nate was found who was willing. He began his address with the words, "I would rather walk twenty miles than preach this sermon." An elaborate symbolic cross was erected over Boehme's grave by his faithful friends. It was promptly torn down by a mob. Three hundred years later the town which had driven him from its gates rose up to honor its most famous son. In 1875 a concourse of scholars and shoemakers celebrated the tercentenary of Boehme's birth and an imposing statue of him was erected in the public square. In 1924, on the anniversary of his death, the magistrates of Görlitz struck off medals in his honor and issued a memorial volume.[11]

Immediately after Boehme's death the manuscripts, which he had produced so fervently and abundantly during the last six years of his life, were frequently copied and received wide circulation. A note to the German edition of his collected works, published in 1715, breaks forth in astonishment with the words:

> One wonders greatly at the mighty zeal with which so many eager souls copied his writings, for men of noble birth worked with joy and wrote day and night. By this means his writings were soon known in Germany, in France (through Balthasar Walter) and in Italy (as witness Henricus Prunnius) and not a little in Poland and Lithuania, not to mention the Netherlands.

It was a fateful moment when one of these wandering manuscripts came to the attention of a traveling Dutch merchant named Abraham Willemsoon von Beyerlandt. He immediately set about the arduous task of collecting copies of all of Boehme's writings, sparing neither effort nor expense. He succeeded in securing a number of autographs, among which was the *Aurora,* which had lain for twenty-seven years in the

[11] *Jacob Boehme und Görlitz, ein Bildwerk,* 1924. *Jacob Boehme Herausgegeben von R. Jecht,* 1924.

archives at Görlitz. By means of these a number of errors which had crept into later manuscripts were corrected. Von Beyerlandt translated his collection into Dutch and published it one volume at a time in Amsterdam between 1634 and 1675. He was assisted in this enterprise by another Dutch merchant named Heinrich Beets (or Bekte). One manuscript entitled *The Last Judgement* escaped these enthusiastic editors. It is said to have been burned in the fire which destroyed Great Glogau in Silesia. In 1630 the work called *The Forty Questions* was translated into Latin and published under the title *Psychologia Vera.*

The first complete German edition of Boehme's work was lovingly and painstakingly edited by the devout and much persecuted Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710) and his society of "Angel Brothers." It issued from the press in Amsterdam, 1682. The "Angel Brothers," seeking to be free from human imperfections, attempted to live in continual contemplation and prayer. Though professing to be disciples of Boehme, they cultivated an asceticism which he would have condemned. Groups of them continued to exist in a number of German cities for at least fifty years after Gichtel's death. To them we owe two other complete editions of Boehme's works published in 1715 and 1730 respectively. These volumes were edited and printed with even greater skill and elaboration than the first edition. About the end of the seventeenth century many books made their appearance in Germany both defending and attacking Boehme's philosophy.[12] Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), the leader of the German Pietists, who like Boehme revolted against the dead orthodoxy of Lutheranism, studied and admired him and even hoped to construct a *Systema der Theologiæ Bohmi-*

[12] The British Museum catalogue lists ten titles for the years 1680-1700.

anæ,[13] but finally gave up the attempt after a vain endeavor to understand his writings. It was eventually not in his own land, but in England, that Boehme's philosophy found its greatest welcome.

Boehme sincerely believed that his philosophy sprang solely from the depths of his own inner experience. Nevertheless it bears marks of the many currents of thought which were sweeping Silesia a hundred years after Luther. Many before Boehme had protested against the course which the Reformation had taken, and he was undoubtedly influenced by some of their opinions. In reply to a letter from Caspar Lindner asking for his opinion of Weybrauch, Schwenkfeld, and Weigel, Boehme appears in the main sympathetic with their views though he complained that they thought of Christ and Mary as too far removed from humanity. (Ep. 12:54, 59.) From Schwenkfeld (1489-1561) he learned that salvation was a new birth within, not dependent on symbols or transactions external to the soul itself. From Weigel (1533-1588) he received the elements of a spiritualized nature mysticism which he refined and deepened.[14] Boehme shows some acquaintance with the controversial literature of his time in his refutation of Stiefel's book on *The Perfection of Man* which in his opinion leaned too far toward pantheism, and also in a polemical work against a Silesian nobleman named Balthaser Tilken in which Boehme opposes

[13] Spener, *Betreff der Inspiration.* In the introduction to a book containing selections from Boehme's works published by the Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, in 1811 there are a number of stories which indicate the wide influence of Boehme on German Pietism and the almost superstitious reverence in which he was held. It is here stated that those who reviled him met sudden and painful death.

[14] "Weigel stands entirely on mystical ground but it was a still farther step to philosophical speculation." Fechner, *J. B. Sein Leben und Schriften,* p. 146. Opel, Weigel's interpreter, disagrees with this. Weigel's influence on Boehme was undoubtedly large. See J. O. Opel, *Valentin Weigel,* Leipzig, 1864.

a false view of predestination. The powerful influence of the mysticism of the Fourth Gospel and of Saint Paul is everywhere apparent. Boehme interpreted the Logos-Christianity of Saint John in his own peculiar way, while Saint Paul's doctrine of the incorruptible body of heavenly substance was taken over with little change.[15] Most of all was he influenced by the Lutheranism which he heard expounded every Sunday morning from the pulpit and by various alchemistic books which constituted the learned scientific literature of the time. The central problem which his philosophy attempts to meet arises out of contradictory points of view between Lutheranism and alchemy.

Schelling maintains that Boehme is not a philosopher, but an "object of philosophy." [16] Weisse styles him not philosopher, but seer.[17] Such judgments arise because Boehme often expressed his ideas through sensuous images rather than conceptual forms.[18] Like a novelist or painter he portrays life itself as an interpretation of life. A thoughtful observer of nature, he deliberately imitates the artless disorder of fields and woods. As Flora in Lucretius' poem "strews all the way and covers it with choicest colors and odors," so

[15] Saint Paul's conception of nature is also suggestive of Boehme. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Rom. 8, 21.

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1:20.)

[16] Hamburger, *J. Boehme,* p. xxviii.

[17] Weisse, *J. B. und seine Bedeutung für unsere Zeit.* Zeitsch. f. Philos. u. Specul. Theol. XVI.

[18] Coleridge comments on this characteristic of Boehme,— "An American Indian with little variety of images and still scantier stock of language is obliged to turn his few words to many purposes by likenesses so clear and analogies so remote as to give his lauguage the semblance and character of lyric poetry interspersed with grotesques. Something not unlike this was the case of such men as Behmen and Fox with regard to the Bible. It was their sole armory of expressions, their only organ of thought." *Biographia Literaria,* Vol. I, p. 150 (London, 1847).

Boehme strews his flowers of thought according to no plan or method, leaving here a patch of vivid color and there a peak of barren rock. Like Goethe, whom Novalis calls the "Boehme of Weimar," he develops his philosophy out of an inner spontaneity as he watches the characters of the cosmic drama enact their appointed rôles. Again, Novalis compares Boehme to a miner who has discovered the inner secrets of the earth and who brings out all that he digs, both jewels and rubbish, and piles them up in lavish confusion.

All Boehme's commentators bewail the extraordinary difficulty and obscurity of his style. The English translation (1650) of a Latin lecture on Boehme delivered at Cambridge University in 1646 expresses the feeling of many readers in its quaint address to the lecturer.

> As to the matter and author of the Teutonick Philosophy which you here abbreviate; though you know I alwaies affected it and him, yet durst never saile on the ocean of his vast conciets with my little skull, methought the reading of him was like the standing upon a precipice or by a cannon shott off, the waft of them lickt up my brains.[19]

Boehme himself would have replied to such a student, "Reader, I had need have an angelical tongue . . . and thou an angelical mind and then we should well understand one another." (T. P. 12:1.) Boehme's system of expression, if once mastered, reveals him as an artist comparable to the anonymous cathedral builders who constructed piles, elaborate, irregular, exquisite, grotesque, but always towering over men's common habitations and pointing to the sky. Schelling's pupils became enthusiastic when their teacher borrowed figures of speech from *The Illuminate of Görlitz.* The chaos in Boehme's works is often more apparent than

[19] Quoted by M. L. Bailey, *Milton and J. Boehme*, p. 62.

real.[20] That which was responsible for throwing William Law into a "perfect sweat" and which made Hegel's "head swim" was the absence of technical diction. The German language had not yet developed a philosophic vocabulary nor did Boehme desire one. He preferred to construct his own symbols.[21] His learned friends gave him the word *idea,* but he impersonated it as the "Heavenly Virgin Sophia." The power of words in the Runic ritual of ancient Germany lay heavy upon him. As Roger Fry writes of Blake, "His forms are the visible counterparts to those words like *the deep, many waters, firmament, the foundations of the earth, pit, and host* whose resonant overtones blur and enrich the sense of the Old Testament." [22] We find in Boehme a kind of empsychosis, to use Stratton's word.[23] Boehme's writings are ideographic rather than graphic. Tieck calls him "the dreamer in the dark paths of the garden of poesie." [24] We are indebted to William Law for the suggestive anecdote of an old shepherd whose wife read aloud to him from Boehme's writings.

John, said I, do you understand all this? Ah, he says, God bless the heart of the dear man. I sometimes understand but very little

[20] One of Boehme's faithful students in modern times, Dr. Herman Vetterling, writes, "The understanding of Boehme comes only by degrees. We begin to read his writings usually with the same ardor that we would begin to read a Chinese puzzle book; in the course of a few years we comprehend a little of what we read; and as we continue our interest grows, our horizon widens, slowly, very slowly, but surely; and we end by admiring and loving our humble teacher." (Vetterling, *The Illuminate of Görlitz,* p. 17.)

[21] Boehme's obscurity was sometimes an object of satire in England; for example, we find in Butler's *Hudibras,* Canto I, ll. 541-542:

"He Anthroposophus and Floud
And Jacob Behmen understood."

[22] Roger Fry, *Vision and Design,* p. 215.

[23] *Psychology of the Religious Life,* p. 247. "It is different," says Stratton, "from imagination in the technical meaning of the word, since the materials used for its products are drawn, not from the senses, but from our invisible life of sentiment and purpose."

[24] Ederheimer, p. 30.

of him and mayhap Betty does not always read right, but that little which I often do understand does me so much good, that I love him where I do not understand him.[25]

Love was indeed the only knowledge which Boehme claimed for himself or desired of others. "One must know," says his disciple, the theologian Oetinger (1738-82), "the thousand weaknesses of humanity in order to endure them with gentleness. Love is patient and friendly and so must he be who would read Jacob Boehme fruitfully." [26]

Novalis writes in similar vein in his poem to Tieck:

Du hilfst das Reich des Lebens gründen
Wenn du voll Demuth dich bemühst
Wo du wirst ewge Liebe finden
Und Jacob Boehmen wiedersiehst.

And Angelus Silesius (1624-77), Boehme's mystical successor in Silesia, expresses the same feeling for his master in the words:

Im Wasser lebt der Fisch, die Pflanze in der Erden
Der Vogel in der Luft, die Sonn' am Firmament
Der Salamander muss im Feu'r erhalten werden
Und Gottes Herz ist Jakob Boehme's Element.

[25] Law, *The Way to Divine Knowledge*, p. 84. John Byrom, the disciple and poetical interpreter of Law, who learned German for the express purpose of reading Boehme, expresses the same opinion as Law's shepherd,—

"When Socrates had read, as authors note,
A certain book that Heraclitus wrote
Deep in its matter and obscure beside,
Asked his opinion of it, he replied,
'All that I understand is good and true,
And what I don't is, I believe, so too.'
. . . . . .
"All the haranguing therefore on the theme
Of deep obscurity in Jacob Boehme
Is but itself obscure; for he might see
Farther 'tis possible, than you or me,
Meanwhile the goodness of his plainer page
Demands the answer of the Grecian sage."
BYROM, *The Reply of Socrates.*

[26] F. C. Oetinger, *Kurzer Auszug der Hauptlehren Jakob Böhms.*

The world's vast laboratory for the psychology of religion exhibits few more interesting specimens than Jacob Boehme. Writers who wish to show that mysticism is pathological find in him much that is to their purpose. Under the influence of strong emotion ordinary processes of thought assumed for him a supernatural significance. He was highly suggestible and often wrote as if he were in a trance. "When I am writing," he says, "the Spirit sometimes dictates to me in such wonderful clearness that I do not know whether I am according to my spirit in this world." [27] (Ep. 2:10.) Boehme's "language of nature" by which he divined the meaning of words from their sounds seems to belong to the "lunatic fringe" of philosophy. The theory which holds that mysticism is in many instances an auto-erotic phenomenon [28] as it often uses the vocabulary of sexual passion, would seem to find occasional support in Boehme's rhapsodies to Sophia, the Virgin Wisdom of God. A writer named Kielholz, following Freud, characterizes Boehme's philosophy as a "sexualization of the whole cosmos." [29]

Psychological classifications of this sort, however inadequate they may be to express the whole truth, imply to certain minds an abnormality that invalidates the philosophical system under discussion. The abnormal need not, however,

[27] C. H. Hamilton, *A Psychological Study of Mysticism,* p. 25, and Inge, *Philosophy of Plotinus,* Vol. II, p. 153, cite the possibly apocryphal incident of the pewter plate as an example of autohypnosis.

[28] Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.* Murisier, *Les malades du sentiment religieux.*

[29] *J. Boehme, ein pathographischer Beitrag zur Psychologie der Mystik,* Leipzig, 1919, p. 25.

It is, however, hardly fair to make so much of the figures of speech which Boehme commonly uses to express his oft-recurring thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. When Hegel says that "Nature is the bride that mind weds" (Encyc. VII) we do not accuse him of eroticism. If Boehme's monogamous dualism is to be so indicted, how could one defend the morals of a pluralist or the parthenogenesis of a monist?

be correlated with the subnormal; may it not sometimes appear as the supernormal? A great mystic is a religious genius. His abnormalities resemble those of other forms of genius. If the ideas which come to a genius are not always born of both nature and spirit in the ordinary manner, but are sometimes conceived only by inspiration of Spirit, may they not attest their divinity by this virgin birth? To Boehme in his ecstasy, Truth is the Son, born of the Virgin Wisdom of God within his soul, but in his less poetic moments he dwells upon another and sterner ancestor, which is none other than a cold, impartial observation of himself and nature. The mysticism of the Görlitz shoemaker was on the whole much less pathological than that of mediæval monasticism. As has been often stressed, Boehme made no ascetic flight from the world. He struggled hard to bring earth and heaven together in the ordinary behavior of human society. In a later chapter it will be shown that he possessed a remarkable insight into his own psychological processes.

Boehme's influence spread quickly from Holland to Britain, where the soil was prepared for his mystic seeds by the previous incursion of anabaptism. This popular early Reformation type of mysticism flowed underground till Cromwell's armies opened the flood gates of outer control, whereupon it immediately became an important ingredient in the swelling stream of English political and religious freedom. The Commonwealth period was a time of extraordinary emotional stress when the land was daily swept by new and strange winds of doctrine. Now at last the Reformation had come in earnest to England. As Episcopacy and Presbyterianism gave way to Independency a chaos of new sects developed and flourished in a general climate of mysticism. One excited Puritan [30] mournfully lists three hun-

dred "errors" of the time and another [31] describes sixty-two different sects. Some called Seekers, finding none of the innumerable new forms of religion suited to their needs, waited silently in small groups for a new revelation.

Into this fermenting, germinating milieu of passionate hope and unlimited aspiration came the influence of two men of prophetic rank, who gave to English Protestant mysticism a definite form and a practical goal. These two were Jacob Boehme and George Fox. Boehme's complete works were translated and published in England between 1644 and 1662 and were widely circulated in religious, literary, and scientific circles. They gave to the popular doctrine of the inner light a solid basis in an elaborately thought-out system of philosophy. What Thomas Aquinas was to Catholicism, such was Jacob Boehme to Protestant mysticism. It is probable that many of Boehme's English followers understood him imperfectly, but we find the prolific mystical literature of that period well salted with "Behmenistic" phrases in an effort to supplement the appeal to Scripture with an appeal to philosophy.[32] In the English translation of the Latin discourse referred to above, which was delivered at Cambridge in 1646, we find the following passage:

> If there be any friendly medium which can possibly reconcile these ancient differences between the nobler wisdom which hath

[30] Edwards, *Gangræna*, 1646.

[31] Pagit, *Herisiography*, 1654.

[32] Boehme's wide influence in England is described in detail in *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (1914) by Rufus M. Jones (Chap. XII) and in *Milton and Jacob Boehme* (1914) by M. L. Bailey (Chap. III). M. L. Bailey establishes a high probability that Boehme influenced *Paradise Lost*. In my discussion of Boehme in England I owe much to these two works. I have also made use of an unpublished study of my own entitled *Minor Sects of the Commonwealth* (a thesis presented for the degree of Master of Arts, Haverford College, 1905).

fixed her Palace in Holy Writ and her stubborn handmaid Natural Reason: this happy marriage of the Spirit and Soul, this wonderful consent of discords in one harmony, we owe in great measure to Teutonicus (Boehme) and his skill.[33]

Richard Baxter, the famous Puritan heresy hunter, lists "Behmenists" as a sect.[34] This "sect" appears to have become the ancestor of the "Philadelphian Society" founded for the purpose of studying and expounding the teachings of Boehme, which lasted well into the eighteenth century, both in England and on the Continent. Among the prominent sixteenth century English students of Boehme were Charles Hotham, Rector of Wigam, author of *Ad Philosophiam Teutonicam Manductio* (1648);[35] Justice Durant Hotham, his brother, a friend of George Fox and author of a *Life of Jacob Behmen* (1653); John Sparrow and John Ellistone, who translated and published all of Boehme's works and whose introductions furnish valuable information regarding Boehme's reception in England; Dr. John Pordage, Jane Leade and Francis Lee, all three members of the Philadelphian Society, who wrote long ecstatic Behmenistic books, which obscure rather than reveal the teachings of their mas-

[33] An *Introduction to the Teutonick Philosophie by C. Hotham Englished by D. F.* London, 1650.

[34] "The fifth sect are the Behmenists whose opinions go much toward the way of the former (the Quakers) for the sufficiency of the Light of Nature, Inward Light, the salvation of the Heathen as well as Christians and a dependence on revelations. But they are fewer in number and seem to have attained to a greater meekness and conquest of passions than any of the rest. Their doctrines are to be seen in Jacob Behmen's Books by him that hath nothing else to do than to bestow a great deal of time to understand him that was not willing to be easily understood." *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ* (London, 1715).

[35] In his "Epistle Dedicatory," Hotham writes, "Whatsoever the thrice-great Hermes deliver'd as Oracles from his Propheticall Tripos or Pythagoras spake by authority, or Socrates debated or Aristotle affirmed, yea, whatever divine Plato prophesied or Plotinus proved; this and all this, or a far higher and profunder philosophy, is (I think) contained in the Teutonicks (Boehme's) writings." From the English translation, 1650.

ter; Samuel Hartlib, scholar and friend of Boehme's biographer, Frankenberg; Elias Ashmole, antiquary and publisher of alchemistical treatises; Thomas Taylor, a Seeker, and Francis Ellington, a Quaker; and Dr. Henry More, leader of the Cambridge Platonists,[36] who calls Boehme the "Apostle of the Quakers." This partial list of Jacob Boehme's English students should include also the unfortunate Charles I, who wrote in a message to Boehme's translator, Sparrow, that the *Forty Questions* was "one of the best inventions that ever I read."[37] Names of such admirers of Boehme could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Now at last the prophecy of "Teutonicus," as the English called him, had come true: "What my fatherland has thrown away will be received with joy by strange peoples." (Ep. 50:10.)

In Quakerism the purely ethical and religious aspects of Boehme's system found fruition,[38] although his speculative teachings were officially repudiated. George Fox, who was born in the year of Boehme's death, became the reformer and leader that Boehme himself had hoped to be. "Every prophet," says Boehme, "is a boundary wherein a time is enclosed. He is the mouthpiece of that realm; when confusion is awakened in it he becomes the mouthpiece of that inward ground which proclaims the vanity of confusion." (M. M. 67:9.) Such a prophet was Fox. He became the spokesman of the highest religious aspirations of seventeenth-century England. It is not certain that he was acquainted

[36] More condemns Boehme in his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus,* but later he praises as well as "censors" him in his *Philosophiæ Teutonicæ censura.*

[37] See Sparrow's introduction to the 40 Q.

[38] Lodowick Muggleton, founder of the Muggletonians, listed as a sect by Baxter, writes in his *Looking Glass for George Fox the Quaker,* p. 10, "I suppose Jacob Behmont's Books were the chief books the Quakers bought for there is the Principle or Foundation of their Religion. . . . And you George Fox are far below Wm. Smith in the knowledge of Jacob Behmont's writings."

at first hand with Boehme's writings, but there are a number of passages in his journal which have a strongly "Behmenistic" tone.[39] Rufus Jones says [40] that Fox and Boehme "were kindred in spirit, of the same household of faith, members of one mystic fellowship and the torch that fell at Görlitz in 1624 was caught and held aloft by the man who was born in that year in Fenny Drayton."

After this first great period of religious exploration and experimentation had closed and the heretical sects had settled down to a quiet and respectable orthodoxy of their own, Boehme continued to be an important factor in English thought. "The influence of Boehme in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," says Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, "is very far reaching. In addition to subjugating the strong intellect of Law, he profoundly influenced Blake. He also affected Thomas Erskine of Linlathen and through him Carlyle, J. W. Farquhar, F. D. Maurice and others." [41] William Law (1687-1762), the famous author of the *Serious Call* and the best-known religious writer of his time, was, in the latter part of his life, won over by Boehme from the ritualistic formalism of a High Church clergyman to sympathy with such radicals as the Quakers.[42] Law's *Appeal to all that Doubt* (1740) and his *Way to Divine Knowledge* (1752) are excellent expositions of some of Boehme's ideas. They are written in prose which is unsurpassed for beauty and lucidity, but they show that their author did not completely grasp the profundity of his master's philosophy. The latter book was written as an introduction to a

[39] See Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, Chap. XII.
[40] *Life and Message of George Fox*, 1924.
[41] C. F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature*, p. 28.
[42] See Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism*, Macmillan, 1928.

new edition of Boehme's work which Law contemplated publishing, but which was not produced until after his death.[43]

According to Law "the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton ploughed with Behmen's heifer." [44] In a letter of Law's we find the following curious information:

> When Sir Isaac died, there was found among his papers large abstracts out of J. Behmen's works, written in his own hand. . . . Sir Isaac was formerly so deep in J. B. that he, together with one Dr. Newton, his relation, set up furnaces and for several months were at work in quest of the tincture. . . . Sir Isaac did but reduce to a mathematical form the central principles of nature revealed in Behmen.[45]

While Newton was undoubtedly a student of Boehme [46] at one time, he probably got little from him. Boehme has much to say of attraction and expansion (not repulsion) and derives the whole material world including the stars out of their interaction. He also seems to have vaguely understood that action and reaction are equal and opposite.[47] Nevertheless he and Newton belong to different epochs of scientific thought.

Law was, apparently, influenced by the writings of Dionysius Andreas Freher (1649-1728), a German philosopher resident in London who was a devout and prolific com-

[43] This edition, printed in four volumes, 1764-81, contains seventeen of Boehme's thirty works. It is not a translation by Law as is generally supposed but is in the main a reprint of Sparrow's earlier editions. The elaborate diagrams in it illustrating Boehme's philosophy are in some cases, perhaps in all, by Freher.

[44] Walton's Notes, etc., p. 72.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[46] "It is almost certain that the idea of the three laws of motion reached Newton through his eager study of Boehme." Spurgeon, *William Law and the Mystics.* This point would bear further investigation.

[47] See page 138.

mentator on Boehme.[48] Some of Freher's manuscripts were published as part of a footnote three hundred pages long in Christopher Walton's *Notes and Materials for an adequate Biography of William Law* (London, 1854), but the remainder form the greatest extant mine of unexplored Boehme literature.[49]

Coleridge has been accused of plagiarizing from Schelling, but he himself asserts that all Schelling has said he has thought out for himself or found in Jacob Boehme.[50] His debt to Boehme is best expressed by himself:

> Why need I be afraid? Say rather how dare I be ashamed of the Teutonic theosophist, Jacob Behmen? . . . One assertion I will venture to make as suggested by my own experience that there exist folios on the human understanding and the nature of man which would have a far juster claim to their high rank and celebrity, if in the whole huge volume there could be found as much fulness of heart and intellect as burst forth in many a single page of George Fox, Jacob Behmen, and even of Behmen's commentator, the pious and fervid William Law. The feeling of gratitude which I cherish toward these men, has caused me to digress further than I had foreseen or proposed; but to have passed them over in an historical sketch of my literary life and opinions, would have seemed to me like the denial of a debt, the concealment of a boon. For the writings of these Mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me a presentiment that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a

[48] In 1739 Law met Joseph Clutton, a well-known Quaker chemist and author who "was a 'great admirer of Jacob Behmen' and possessed a manuscript of Andreas Freher, an interpreter of Boehme, some of whose commentaries were carefully copied out by Law in the years following this date." Hobhouse, *William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism*, p. 237.

[49] A list of the Freher MSS. is given by Walton on pp. 679-684 and also in an Appendix to Barker's edition of Boehme's *Three-fold Life* (London, 1909). The MSS. are in Dr. William's Library, London.

[50] J. D. Campbell, *S. T. Coleridge, London*, 1894, p. 187.

sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter.[51]

Of the two major sources of William Blake's obscure philosophy, Swedenborg and Boehme, Boehme is undoubtedly the more important. "Any man of mechanical talents," writes Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* "may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's." Swedenborg was condemned apparently because he had not discovered the value of Hell in the universal scheme of things. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake revives Boehme's dualism. "Without Contraries," he writes, "is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell." Not only in his dualism and in his view of evil does Blake follow Boehme closely, but also in his theory of the fall as a descent from unity to plurality; in his view of our present existence as due to a contraction of self-hood; in his conception of imagination as a means of breaking through this contraction; in his reliance on double, triple and even fourfold vision and in much more besides he is clearly a disciple of the "inspired shoemaker" though he uses a vocabulary of his own.[52]

Boehme made his first appearance in America in a book

[51] *Biographia Literaria,* London, 1847, Vol. I, p. 153. Boehme was one of the four "men unjustly branded" whose vindication Coleridge planned to write. *Ibid.,* p. 154.

[52] Among other English students of Boehme was Henry Brooke (1703-83), author of the once famous novel the *Fool of Quality.* This book as well as his two long poems *Universal Beauty* (1735) and *Redemption* (1750) are full of Behmenistic phrases.

published in 1688 by a Quaker named Daniel Leeds.[53] This little volume contains an excellent summary of his teachings. Leeds thinks that in Boehme "the eternal day was but dawning," but now in the Quakers "the glorious sun has arisen." A group of German Pietists, mystics and ardent followers of Boehme settled in Germantown near Philadelphia in 1694, bringing much Boehme literature with them. Their leader was John Kelpius. Whittier says of Pastorius, the founder of Germantown, who had come in an earlier Pietist migration that, like Boehme, he "read his creed in flowers."

> For by the lore of Görlitz' gentle sage
> With the mild mystics of his dreamy age
> He read the herbal signs of nature's page.[54]

In England it was the ethical and religious aspects of Boehme's philosophy which exerted most influence, but in Germany, as would be expected, the speculative elements found greatest favor. "In Jacob Boehme," says Hegel, "philosophy first appeared in Germany with a character peculiar to itself." [55] The natural romanticism of the German people was not long held in check by the limitations to knowledge set up by Kant. Post-Kantians, particularly that small group of literary geniuses among whom were Tieck, Novalis, the two Schlegels and Schleiermacher,[56] all of whom were born

[53] "The Temple of Wisdom or the Little World." The first Philosophically Divine Treating of the Being of all Beings and whence everything has its original as Heaven, Hell, Angels, Men, Devils, Earth, Stars and particularly all mysteries concerning the Soul and Elements and Adam before and after the Fall. Also a treatise of the *Four Complexions* with the cause of spiritual sadness. Collected, published and intended for the general Good By D. L." Philadelphia, 1688.

[54] Whittier, *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim.* In 1811 Boehme's *Way to Christ* and five of his epistles were published by the Seventh Day Baptists, a later Pietist migration, at the press of their quaint "convent" which is still standing at Ephrata, Pennsylvania.

[55] Hegel, *Werke,* XV, 270.

[56] Mention should also be made of Franz von Baader (1765-1841) who was by far the most devout Boehme enthusiast of this period.

about 1770, looked to Boehme as their spiritual ancestor. It was he who gave the young romanticists their first ravishing glimpse of the living heart of Nature, an insight which Kant had coldly forbidden. "The philosophy of that time," says Ederheimer,[57] "is spoken of as a poetic Spinozism. Its chief representatives were Schelling and Goethe. As a result of Boehme's influence the rigid unity of Spinoza's teaching was poetized to a unity of the universal life." The Rationalists of the earlier eighteenth century had had small use for Boehme. Lessing and Herder ridiculed his crudities, but were not without sympathy with his genius. Lavater came more strongly under his influence. He says of Boehme's writings, "though they seem, or rather are, so abhorrent they are yet an inexhaustible gold mine of Germanity and poetry."[58] Lavater introduced Boehme's writings to Tieck, who, with ill-concealed contempt, carried the book home. As he perused the work of the old German mystic he found that he had "brought a firebrand into his house." Like the other Romanticists he welcomed one who could bring him back from the passionless star-gazing of the Enlightenment to the mysteries of living nature.

> Man [says Tieck] were happy had he not striven higher. Nature surrounded him and took care of him, and played with him as with her child. But the proud one freed himself from his mother; he saw the stars which hang over his head, he climbed a cliff and cried to them, "I am near to you." Smiling pitifully the stars looked down upon him and he stands now bewildered by the dizzy abyss, looking down to the blooming meadow which he has spurned; he has lost the way back.[59]

Boehme helped Novalis also to find the lost way back. Novalis writes to Tieck:

[57] *Jacob Boehme und die Romantiker*, p. 45.
[58] Quoted by Feilchenfeld, *Der Einfluss Jacob Boehmes auf Novalis*, p. 29.
[59] Tieck, *Abdallah*.

I am now reading Jacob Boehme connectedly and begin to understand him as he must be understood. In him can be seen throughout the mighty spring with its gushing, driving, forming and mingling forces by which the world is outwardly born from within, a real Chaos [60] full of dark desire and miraculous life.[61]

Friedrich Schlegel discovers that Boehme is a poet as well as a philosopher.

He is without doubt [says Schlegel] the most inclusive, richest, and most many sided of all mystics. He not only explains the Scriptures allegorically, as does Pico della Mirandola, in order to give commonplace religious conceptions a higher meaning, but he penetrates as far into physics as did Fludd or Paracelsus, and brings forth a system, or, if it cannot be so called, a complete expression of an entire speculative Philosophy.[62]

In another essay he writes:

If it should be found that imagination has far greater share than has enlightened understanding in the development of his genius, it must be confessed that it is a very poetic imagination that we discover in this strange spirit. Considering him merely as a poet and comparing him with other poets who have attempted to deal with supersensual things, with Klopstock, or Milton, or Dante, it must be admitted that he almost surpasses them in the richness of his fancy and the depth of his feeling, nor is he inferior to them in the beauty of his poetic expressions.[63]

In spite of the sincere devotion of these German men of letters Boehme would probably have consigned all the Romanticists to the devil. Boehme's devil is that kind of a poet who knows not the straight gate and narrow way to reality but "remains ever with his legions in the realms of phantasie." This devil would have agreed with Novalis in saying "the more poetic the truer" and *"Alles ist ein*

[60] "Chaos" is here used in the alchemistic sense as the lower stage out of which the higher comes. Thus an egg is the "chaos" of a bird.
[61] *Briefe an Ludvig Tieck,* quoted by Ederheimer.
[62] Schlegel, *Vorlesungen aus den Jahren 1804-1806.*
[63] Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur.*

Märchen." Romantic "irony," which arises because the soul's longing remains ever unsatisfied, is not to be found in Boehme. For Tieck this "longing" leaves only a "deadly unquenchable pain," but for Boehme such pain was the gate to salvation and peace. Though Romanticism brought man back to earth from the heaven gazing of Rationalism, it gave him no new guiding star. Novalis raises the veil of Saïs—"But what saw he? He saw—miracle of miracles—he saw himself." [64] Boehme saw God and escaped the Romantic subjectivity. Romanticism only discovered the out-going nature-will in Boehme. It missed the in-going self-renunciation which alone recognizes ultimate objectivity.

Boehme is a better "Chaos," to use Novalis' term, of Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, in more than one sense of the word. Schelling's overwhelming debt to Boehme is well known, but as Schopenhauer says of Schelling's *Enquiries into Human Freedom,* "It is almost a revived makeup of Jacob Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum.* But what in Schelling is absurd, in Boehme is read with admiration. Schelling takes from Boehme only what he could take and does not know how to separate the husk from the fruit." [65] Schopenhauer comes nearest to being Boehme's real heir, but not having had Boehme's profound religious experiences, he could not see what Boehme saw beyond the depths of self-renunciation. His philosophy ends with a negation to be carried further, he says, by the mystics among whom he mentions Boehme.[66] The mighty effort of German Romantic Idealism to discover the wholly satisfying ultimate which Kant had denied to this life, culminated in Hegel. Hegel

[64] *Fragmente,* p. 177. Quoted by Ederheimer.
[65] *Handschriften, Nachlass,* p. 261.
[66] *The World as Will and as Idea,* III, 432. (Haldane's Translation.)

spurns mysticism, yet he uses the same logic of life that Boehme uses and his so-called "reasoning" is based on the reconciliation of the contradictory opposites of the mystical paradox. But Hegel's "logic" does not take us so far as Boehme's "experience." Schopenhauer and Boehme were right. Only the mystics have found that ultimate garden where blossoms the Blue Flower of Romanticism and Jacob Boehme's Lily.[67]

Accordingly, although for many Boehme's writings appear to be "the outpouring of a God-drunken Heart" [68] yet as Fechner truly claims, "In him philosophy breaks through the darkness of the mystical world," [69] and as Carrière says, "He contains in germ, the whole new philosophy." [70] Perhaps we cannot agree with Frankenburg in holding that Boehme was that new and extraordinary star in the heavens which, in the year 1572, three years before his birth made its awful and alarming appearance in Cassiopeia," but we can at least say with another biographer, Lasson, "He is a stern prophetic figure in an age of transition." [71]

Boehme's neighbors said to him, "What ails the fool, when will he be done with his dreaming?" "You will see," he said, "what kind of a dream this will be." (Aur. 11:150.) As the sequel showed, it was a dream prophetic of the future philosophy of Germany. German idealism was implicit in

[67] No account of Boehme's influence, however brief, should omit mention of the great French mystic and prophet, Claude St. Martin (1743-1803). Though called *"le philosophe inconnu"* he was a powerful opponent of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. He translated the *Aurora* into French and his writings are thoroughly permeated with the teachings of Boehme whom he calls *"mon second educateur,"* Martinez de Pasqualis having been his first teacher. (*Œuvres posthumes*, I, II.)

[68] Opel, *Weigel*, p. 250.

[69] Fechner, *J. B., seine Leben und seine Schriften*, p. 15.

[70] Carrière, *Die philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit*, p. 311.

[71] Lasson, *Jacob Boehme*, p. 34.

him, not as Plato was latent in Socrates, a steady light to increase in brilliance, but as the Old Testament prophesied the New in occasional brilliant flashes, alternating with longer periods of darkness.

Two contraries war against each other in Fury and Blood
And Los [1] fixes them on his anvil, incessant his blows,
He fixes them with strong blows placing the stones and timbers
To create a world of generation from a world of death.

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Jerusalem.*

[1] Imagination.

CHAPTER III

ALCHEMY

THE fundamental concept of Boehme's philosophy was *life*. He inherited this emphasis from the alchemists whose categories of science were biological. Hermetic philosophers viewed nature as a living whole, composed of organically related parts. This organism was intensely alive at its heart, though wholly dead at its periphery. Boehme did more than borrow a large part of his vocabulary from alchemy, he took over the alchemistic world-view which he developed into a philosophic system. His universe was permeated with living forces whose outer aspects half concealed and half revealed the inner vital essence.

There is some significance in the fact that the concept of *life* was fundamental in this age of transition from mediæval to modern thought. In the Holy Trinity which was regarded as energy the Father, idea the Son, and life the Holy Spirit, life appears as intermediate between energy and idea. The Middle Ages were strongly influenced by Platonic and Aristotelian thought in which Idea was the fundamental concept. The universe was accordingly thought of as moved by its goal, that is, by causes which operated from in front. In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, under the influence of the quantitative science of Galileo and Newton, the concepts of matter and energy became fundamental. The universe was then thought of as composed wholly of

inert substances moved by external forces. Life was believed to be a complicated mechanism and mind a useless, inexplicable mirage. According to this view matter and motion are the sole realities, and the universe is accordingly moved only by causes which operate from behind.

But between the Platonic world-view of a universe whose unifying principle was pure intellect and the Newtonian world-view of a universe unified through a common substratum of matter moving according to fixed laws appeared the so-called pseudo-sciences of the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. These made life the unifying principle. Life is neither mind nor matter, but apparently partakes of characteristics of both. Life accordingly became a useful concept in an age when science was passing over from rationalism to empiricism. In the philosophical-empirical sciences of the Renaissance the universe is moved neither from in front nor from behind, but from within. Such science is neither idealistic nor materialistic, but vitalistic. It conceives of the universe as organically related into a single living whole. This third world-view has been too much neglected both by historians of philosophy and historians of science. It has been neglected by philosophers because it was too scientific and by scientists because it was too philosophical. Nevertheless, it is of peculiar historical significance. Boehme is its greatest expositor. In an age of transition he was a philosopher of life. Now after an interval of three hundred years the pendulum of scientific thought appears to be swinging back to its former position. The philosophy which is growing up in the twentieth century in connection with the new physics seems to present the elements of an organic world-view, which bears at least a family resemblance to the conceptions of science of the sixteenth

century. It is too early as yet to prophesy with much assurance regarding the direction in which physics of to-day will lead philosophy, but certain trends are already fairly clear. The attempt to explain life in terms of mechanics is being supplanted by an effort to explain mechanics in terms of life. Can it be that Jacob Boehme, the leading philosopher of a previous age of transition, will take his place as a real prophet of our present transitional epoch?

Boehme's philosophy was unaffected by mechanistic theories. At the very time that he was writing his books Galileo, Kepler, and Bacon were laying the foundations of modern science. None of these new conceptions, however, penetrated to the shoemaker's cottage in Görlitz. Jacob Boehme was naturally compelled to work with the materials at hand. These were supplied by the pseudo-science of alchemy. This fact might appear to discredit him, for alchemy, in spite of sincere and prodigious efforts, often degenerated into the wildest absurdities and the most palpable humbug. Boehme was not wholly free from alchemistic nonsense, but in general he repudiated that part of alchemy which we now know to have been false. He retained and valued that part which has in many respects a strangely modern tone.

Alchemy was a vigorous attempt to prove in the laboratory a Neo-Platonic philosophy of nature. It failed, not because it was wholly unscientific in its methods, but because its hypotheses were wrong. Its methods were "scientific" to a certain degree. It searched nature in an objective and empirical manner. Its hypotheses were wrong because it was previously committed to Aristotelian "forms." These could not be discovered and isolated by laboratory instruments. Alchemy attempted to obtain in its retorts and crucibles the inner essences or souls of things as if they were composed

of light and volatile matter. It treated the qualitative as if it were the quantitative. Aristotelianism was turned upside down by attempts to deal with the "forms" immanent in the world as if they were vital forces or semi-material essences. This effort arose out of a degenerate form of Neo-Platonism. It is a curious fact that Neo-Platonism was not only the ancestor of a mysticism of the contracting type, as in the case of the great mystics of the Church, but also, though much polluted in the crucibles of the adepts, it helped to produce this out-going mystical attempt to read the essential secrets of nature. This was possible because Platonic Ideas were at once transcendent and immanent. Religious mysticism seized upon their transcendent aspect; science, through the doctrine of participation of things in ideas, was inspired to search for inner unifying principles in nature. Immanent scientific Platonism flowed through a network of subterranean channels and became contaminated with primitive animism and folklore, and with Jewish Kabbalism and number-mysticism. Here the Realm of Ideas became so saturated with matter that the clear transcendent abstractions of the Greeks can hardly be distilled from it. Now at last in the philosophy of the alchemists the Ideas had soaked up enough earth to support life. During the seventeenth century the course of the Platonic stream divided. One branch swelled into the full current of German Idealism. It discovers a cosmos filled with meaning and purpose. The other branch developed into physical science. It finds a universe controlled by immanent law.

Alchemy has a much longer and more variegated history than its offspring, chemistry. Its amazingly prolific literature, buried under a vocabulary which has ceased to have meaning, seems too barren to reward investigation. It

appears to have first become prominent in Alexandria where it began its spectacular course as a series of receipts for metalworkers' apprentices. Somewhat later, uniting with Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and Stoic traditions regarding a cosmos permeated by the Divine, it spread eastward to Syria and Arabia, where it was known as "Platonism according to the Egyptians." Berthelot in *La chimie au moyen age* traces its descent for a thousand years through a multitude of Syrian and Arabic treatises until it finally reached Europe by way of Spain. After the fall of the Kaliphate (1031) it still prospered and was carried north by students from the Spanish universities to become rapidly fused with European thought. Even such orthodox churchmen as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas wrote alchemistic treatises. In the century preceding Boehme, the two most important alchemists were Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486-1535) and Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541). During their many travels and adventures, alternately patronized and persecuted by the great, these two worked out a highly imaginative and romantic view of nature. This they set forth in language as obscure as it was picturesque.

The alchemists differed widely among themselves, but it is possible to sift out a few elements common to their more important spokesmen. The human intellect, newly freed by the Renaissance from the bondage of school and cloister, acknowledged no limits to its powers. Nature was an open book whose secret language might be deciphered and whose powers could accordingly be controlled by man. Through man passed all the streams of circulating spiritual force which bound together the world, animate and inanimate, terrestrial, celestial, and diabolic, into an organic complexity of sympathies and antipathies. Man is a microcosm, a cross

section of the whole universe. He can know all things merely by knowing himself. Thus alchemy took over the negative self-directed mysticism of Neo-Platonism and turned it into a theory of scientific knowledge. It held that man was a denizen of all three worlds, natural, astral, and celestial. Therefore he could know all three. In the natural world knowledge is sensual, for the body is in nature; in the "astral" world knowledge is intellectual, because through man flow the rational emanations of the stars; in the celestial world knowledge is intuitional, for a spark of infinite Deity dwells in the human soul.

Alchemy is a philosophy of evolution. It beheld nature as an animated process developing through successive embodiments of inner vital energy. This evolution was, according to some theories, based on the interaction of two primordial substances, called "*prima materia*" and the "philosophers' stone." "*Prima materia*" was not quantitatively measurable, but was the "possibility of bodily formation." It was thought of as wholly passive. The philosophers' stone was the divine producing power at the heart of things. It was a "radical moisture" of supernatural kind, simple and indestructible. Through solution and putrefaction this "universal," "*quinta essentia*" or "mercury of the philosophers," could be freed from particulars which accrued to it from base matter. Evolution upward took place by successive action or "tincture" [1] of the philosophers' stone, each stage becoming matter for the stage next above it. Man could assist this evolution.[2] He could find in bodies comparatively gross and

[1] "Tincture" is the living spirit-form between the ideal and the real.

[2] "Q. Give a concise definition of Nature.

"A. It is not visible though it operates visibly, for it is simply a volatile spirit fulfilling its office in bodies and animated by the universal spirit, the divine breath, the central and universal fire which unifies all things which exist.

dead, substances light and living which were the souls of the grosser bodies. Thus a hidden higher stage could be brought to manifestation. The chemist could externally add soul to body so that the body became more perfect. The metals do not differ in nature, but in degree. They develop in the womb of earth toward gold which is their perfect state. By combining a "tincture" with a lower metal it could be brought a stage further toward gold.

The philosopher with his crucible imitates God in creation according to the process described in the book of Genesis. Like God he extracts light out of the dark crude mass, then the waters above and below the firmament are distinguished and so the process proceeds. In his commentary on Genesis, Boehme follows the entire alchemistic process in minute detail, but gives it his own peculiar meaning. (*Mysterium Magnum,* chaps. X-XV.) To the alchemists the same principles of evolution hold for human souls as for nature. Both partake of a single universal process typified by the transmutation of lead into gold. Such is the transformation from the sick body into health, and the exaltation of the soul into Christ. Christ is the "philosophers' stone," "the stone which the builders rejected." This is the "Universal Chemistry" by which the Divine Tincture "transmutes base metal of the soul into perfection that can survive the fire of eternity." [3] There is a transforming tincture for all souls, the soul of metal, the human soul, even the *Weltgeist.*[4]

"Q. What is the object of research of the philosophers?
"A. Proficiency in the art of perfecting what nature has left imperfect and the attainment of the treasure of the Philosophers Stone." *Short Catechism of Alchemy* (Waite, *Paracelsus,* p. 287).

[3] Anon., *Lives of the Alchemistical Philosophers,* p. 3.

[4] "Question not those imposters who tell you of a 'sulphur tingens' and I know not what fables, who pin also that narrow name of Chemia on a science both ancient and infinite. It is the Light only that can truly be mul-

The divine Mercury [says Boehme] changes the wrathful Mercury into its property and Christ is born,—and a new man appears as hidden gold out of the earthly property. Hereby it is shown the adept how he shall seek (for the philosopher's stone); not otherwise than as he has sought and found himself in the property of pure gold; and so likewise is this process; for man, and the earth with its secrets, lie shut up in the like curse and death and need one and the same restitution. (*Signatura Rerum* 8:52, 53.)

The self-renunciation which brings this transformation about is the inner spiritual form of the transforming fire of the alchemist.

When Boehme speaks of the "process of Christ," as he often does in the *Signatura Rerum,* he may be discussing either "Chemistry," the rebirth of the human soul, or the birth of God in the universe. All three are examples of a universal law of development. Man is not the only microcosm. All things are microcosms struggling each in its own way, just as the universe is struggling, to manifest hidden gold of the Divine Kingdom by consuming the grosser elements in the purifying fire of life. The world is one vast alchemistic retort distilling base metal of nature and natural man into the gold of perfection.[5]

The "science" of alchemy is hidden from the curious under a strange and ever-changing vocabulary. "If we have concealed anything," says Geber, "ye sons of learning wonder not; we have not concealed it from you, but have delivered it in such strange language so as it may be hid from evil men."[6] Boehme, having no philosophic vocabulary of his

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tiplied for this ascends to and descends from the first fountain of multiplication and generation. If to animals, it exalts animals; if to minerals it refines minerals and translates them from the worst to the best conditions." Thomas Vaughan: *Anima Magica Abscondita.*

[5] "Destruction perfects that which is good; for the good cannot appear on account of that which conceals it. . . . By the element of fire all that is imperfect is destroyed and taken away." Paracelsus, *Cœlum Philosophorum.*

[6] James Miller, *Alchemistic Symbolism.*

own, adopts a large part of the vocabulary of alchemy and is quite as successful at concealment as his predecessors. One example may suffice.

> Thus let the philosopher observe that when the three murderers Saturn, Mars, and Mercury, are drowned in the blood of the lion they do not perish, but they are pardoned, that is, their wrath is changed to a love desire; out of Venus into Sol, for when the fiery desire enters into the watery desire, then a stirring, a glorious splendour arises from, and in the fire; for Venus is white and the fire desire is red. (Sig. Rer. 11:41.)

This, it may not be superfluous to explain, is the beginning of an alchemistic account of what Christ meant when he said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Translated into modern terms it is a reasonably clear explanation of that process by which the human is "tinctured" with the divine so that "might is changed into love." (Sig. Rer. 11:48.)

Boehme is often classified as an alchemist.[7] The Lutheran theologian Harless in an extended treatise, entitled *Jacob Boehme und die Alchemisten,* endeavors to discredit him by making him an alchemist and nothing more. Boehme, he says, only differed from Paracelsus by going one step further. He "threw God himself into the Alchemistic Retort." Formerly, God was inscrutable to the alchemists. Now Boehme watches him develop out of primordial matter according to the recipes of the art. Harless concludes that Boehme's God is sulphuric acid. This, however, is a gross confusion of form and content as will be shown in what follows.

It is true that Boehme owed much to the alchemists, particularly to Paracelsus, but he went far beyond them, not

[7] Lippmann says that Boehme with all the elements "*gar nichts genug zu tun weiss,—sondern auch die bedeutendsten Naturforscher des zeitalters.*" (*Alchemie,* p. 510.)

only in his theogony but in many other directions. Hegel truly says, "Paracelsus is much more confused and lacks Boehme's depth of mind." [8] One important difference between the two lies in the fact that Paracelsus had no genuine theory of evil. Although a contemporary of Luther, he did not accept Luther's conception of a radical evil and so did not promote evil into a metaphysical principle as real as goodness. His philosophy is permeated with the Platonism of the Church. Christianity is the highest *"Potenz"* in nature, its crown and end. The other end is zero. Paracelsus accordingly believes that the world was created from above out of nothing. "Every created thing," he says, "longs to be again that which it was before the creation. That is now the ground of all our philosophy. . . . The elements are created out of nothing and long to return again to nothing." They are *"Verkörperte Nichts."* (Philos. ad Ath. 1, 1:21.) Boehme denies this.

> Many authors [he says] have written that heaven and earth were created out of nothing. Now where nothing is, nothing can come to be. All things must have a root else nothing can grow.—But the earth is come from the corrupted Salniter (substances) of the outermost birth. You cannot deny when you look upon the earth and stones that death is therein; otherwise neither gold nor silver nor vegetables nor grass would grow in it. Yes, life presses through death, the outermost birth is death, the second is life, which consists of anger and love, and the third is the Holy Life. (A. 19:67-70.)

Boehme is thus shown to be an evolutionist while Paracelsus is an emanationist. Boehme believes in a genuine progress from real imperfection to real perfection while, for Paracelsus, nature is a Platonic ladder from nothing to reality. A comparison between the two is, however, hardly just, for the weird medical recipes of Paracelsus are of slight consequence

[8] Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, Eng. trans., p. 273.

in comparison with the profound philosophical thoughts of Boehme.

Boehme repeatedly denies that he is an alchemist. "Do not take me for an Alchemist," he says, "for I write only in the knowledge of the Spirit and not from experiments." (A. 22:105.) "I have read many noble masters in the hope of finding therein ground and true depth, but I have found nothing but a half dead spirit." (A. 10:45.) He adds, however, "I must needs say that their scheme of formulation is my master; from it I have the first elements of my knowledge and it is not my purpose to controvert or emend their formulæ." (A. 22:14.) Boehme's principal objection to the alchemists seems to be that they were too materialistic. "This tincture," he says, in referring to the philosophers' stone, "is hid from the Alchemists because it bears witness of itself out of the eternal, while they seek it in the earthly." [9]

Boehme does not, like the alchemists, lose himself in the sensual. In temperament, methods, and interests he differed from them. He owed to them a portion of his vocabulary because he could find no other words in which to express his ideas. Yet there is a sense in which the philosophical chemistry of the Renaissance culminated in Jacob Boehme. He developed into a philosophical system its central conception of nature as a vast organism in which the human will plays a decisive part. Our next consideration will be the analysis of the question as to what this part played by the will really is. Boehme was convinced by his scientific studies

[9] "Thus when he (Boehme) first appeared in English many persons of this nation, of the greatest wit and abilities became his readers, who instead of entering in to his one and only design, which was their own regeneration from an earthly to a heavenly life, turned chymists and set up furnaces to regenerate metals in search of the philosophers' stone. And yet of all men in the world no one has so deeply and from so true a ground laid open the exceeding vanity of such labor." (Law, *Way to Divine Knowledge*, p. 107.)

that man creates in the same way that God creates; but he was just as surely convinced that man must submit to an objective order. Human life is part of the whole stream of life which flows between the dark nature-will which is called the Father and the goal of all things which is termed the Son. It cannot lose itself wholly, either in the beginning or the end, either in earth or heaven; for it has an important part to play in redeeming itself and nature, each becoming transformed through the action of the other. How then can the will be both active and passive, at once furthering the evolutionary process and resigning itself to the Divine Will? [10]

[10] In connection with alchemy a word should be said about a kindred influence, the Kabbalah, particularly that curious combination of Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Philonism, and Rabbinical Theology known as the Zohar. Boehme occasionally mentions it (177 Th. Fr. 3:33. 6:7-11) and some of his phraseology can be traced to it. Amid the horrors of persecution in the Middle Ages the Kabbalah renewed in the hunted Jews the old hope for speedy redemption accompanied by supernatural events. Unsatisfied by Judaized Aristotelian rationalism or the strict relentless logic of Talmudic schools, they hungered for something imaginative and spiritual. They were attracted by the Kabbalistic principle, that mystic speculation based on words, numbers, and phrases, is an effective means of communion with God. They saw concrete spiritual realities in the most insignificant object and the simplest phenomenon alluded to something in the Divine mind. (See Greenstone, *The Messianic Idea in Jewish History,* p. 162.) Boehme adopts from the Kabbalah the theory that the Bible cloaks many significant meanings in simple lauguage. The mysticism of the Zohar is founded on the Neo-Platonic emanation theory. (Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism.*)

I rest not from my great task
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal eyes
Of man inwards into worlds of Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the bosom of God, the human Imagination.

Rivers, mountains, cities, villages,
All are human, and when you enter into their bosoms you walk
In Heavens and Earths, as in your own bosom you bear your Heaven
And earth and all you behold, though it appears without, it is within
In your Imagination, of which this world of Mortality is but a shadow.

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Jerusalem.*

CHAPTER IV

SYMBOL AND REALITY

We have defined Boehme's central problem as the reconciliation or harmonization of two wills, the negative in-going religious will and the positive out-going nature will. The first is a "resigned will" seeking, through self-surrender, a supersensible divine object. The second is a "self will" seeking through self-assertion to know and control external nature. These two wills may be correlated respectively with the two main historical influences on Boehme's thought, Lutheranism and alchemy. Lutheranism convinced him that the world belonged to the devil and that he should flee from it and direct his mind toward heaven. Alchemy lured him back toward this world in which human wills assist God and nature in bringing latent divine potentialities to manifestation. Boehme accepted both challenges, but with reservations. In Lutheranism he rejected the extreme negativity which made it impossible to bridge the gap between flesh and spirit in this life. In alchemy he rejected the semi-materialism by which it crossed the rainbow span with fatal ease. He accepted the heaven directed will of Protestantism and the earth directed will of alchemy and discerned a single goal for both in a universal life. This life more than included them both, for it appeared as the operation and manifestation not of a twofold, but of a "three-fold

will." This trinity is (1) negative in that it wills backward to the Father, (2) positive in that it wills forward to the Son and (3) intermediary in that it alternates between the negative and positive as a Spirit which fashions the warp and woof of temporal existence. To show what Boehme means by this "three-fold will" is to show what he means by knowledge. The true and higher knowledge spans the interval between flesh and spirit by means of the bridge of the "three-fold will." Man's lower knowledge cannot resolve the dualism because, to quote our author's figure, it is "like a cow before a new barn door" (S. P. 7:21), afraid to hazard the venture of faith.

An approach to this important distinction which Boehme draws between higher and lower knowledge can best be made through his analysis of religious knowledge. As always, it is the practical and religious, rather than the theoretical which preoccupies this zealous philosopher. "Our whole teaching," he says, "is nothing else than to show how a man may kindle God's light-world in himself." (S. P. 7:33.)

Boehme's indictment of Protestantism is summed up in the phrase "History is the faith of to-day" (Von Wahrer Busse), and his own position is stated in the sentence, "You must be born again through a living movement of the will." (Inc. III, 3:7.) He addresses the Church with the words:

> You retain only the shell of God's word which has no power, you keep the *historical* part and fight about it; and the *power* of it you deny. Of what avail is your knowledge? The devil knows as much as you know, but he does not do it; therefore the kingdom of God remains hidden from you both. (T. F. L. 13:37.)

The Reformation, according to Boehme, has produced no real change.

In Germany it is supposed that Antichrist (The Catholic Church) has been gone out from, but it has not yet happened for they who now curse Antichrist are grown out of the tree of Antichrist." (T. F. L. 12:28.) Oh, if some Jesuits should come and demand the Church from them (the Reformers) again, what good Papists they would make. (Ep. 64:10.)

"In the great Babel," Boehme's usual word for the established church, "they quarrel about the words and permit the spirit of Understanding to lie *in mysterio.*" (Ep. to A. von Sommerfeld.) The church "depends on the dead letter" (Chr. Test) and "is only a letter dealer." (M. M. 36:63.) Boehme attacks this emphasis on the external in his refutation of the doctrine of imputed righteousness. "Therefore it is all an 'Ungrund,' " he says, "what Babel teaches of external imputed righteousness and an externally acquired childlikeness. A stranger can not inherit God's kingdom, but an inborn righteousness out of God's Being." (Ep. to Dr. Koschwitz.) He similarly protested against the ordinances. "The sacraments are mere symbols and not realities, . . . Christendom has departed from the apostolic virtues and instead of Christ's kingdom has set up a pompous and hypocritical one through baptism and the Lord's supper." (T. F. L. 13:28.) Protestantism had substituted law for life. "Your laws, councils, decrees are mere deceit. The Spirit of Christ will not be bound by any law." (T. F. L. 3:67.) "God's law is written in our hearts as is also the way to life. It lies in no one's knowing nor in mere historical opinion, but in a good will and well doing." (T. F. L. 6:19, 20.)

Boehme's biographers seem astonished that a man so meek and law-abiding should have been persecuted and driven from home. When, however, we read that pastors "are as profitable to a church as a fifth wheel to a wagon" (M. M.

63:46), that the church is *"ein geistliches Hurenhaus"* (M. M. 63:45), that as "a beast man goes to church and as a beast he comes out (Gellasenheit), that the church "has only a mouth-christianity, and the heart is worse than when they were heathens" (Ep. 58:7), and many similar expressions, we can hardly wonder at the fury of Boehme's enemies.

Boehme breaks sharply with the bibliolatry and creed worship of Lutheran pastors. He stoutly declares that he is not dependent for his knowledge of religious truth either on authority or tradition.

> Though an angel from heaven would say otherwise yet would I not believe it, much less understand it, for I would always doubt. But when the sun goes up in my spirit then am I certain. (Aur. 11:136.)

He does not hesitate to declare that Moses is sometimes wrong. (Aur. 18:1-5, 19:100.)

> It is very likely [he says] that before the flood the creation was not described in writing, but the account was passed along from one generation to another as a dark word in men's memories. (Aur. 22:26.)

In his defence against Richter he writes "another time has come, a man no longer believes what any one may say, he demands a proof." (Apol. contra Richter, 67.)

We must not suppose, however, that in rejecting authority as the supreme test of truth Boehme advocated a merely subjective religion. In his *Apologia contra Tilken* he strenuously denies the charge of antinomianism. In fact it is this very charge that he himself repeatedly makes against the Lutheran pastors, claiming that they reason subjectively and do not study external nature. "Without the light of Nature," he says, "there is no understanding of divine mysteries." (Ep. 4:13.) The whole labor of Boehme's philoso-

phy is to find room for both outer and inner lights. "We do not," he says, "depend on the light of outer nature alone, for us both suns shine." Boehme will not give up the historical faith, for it is "a soil where a spark glimmers; we must give it fuel wherein it can be kindled." (Inc. II, 8:1.) The historical faith of Christianity plays in Boehme's system the same part as the world of natural objects. Both, as we shall find, are images of deeper realities which can be actualized through living experience.

The contrast between historical and living facts, outer shell and inner reality, exists in almost every sentence of Boehme's works. He always sees double. He would have agreed with William Blake in saying:

> For a double vision my eyes do see
> And a double vision is always with me
> With my inward eye 'tis an old man gray
> With my outward a thistle across the way.[1]

It was such a vision of nature and the struggling life within it as we find in Whitman [2] and Maeterlinck.

The whole outward visible world with all its being is a signature or figure of the inward spiritual world; whatever it is internally and however its operation is, so likewise it has its character externally . . . the internal holds the external before it as a glass wherein it beholds itself in the property of the generations of all forms; the external is its signature. (Sig. Rer. 1:3.)[3]

[1] Poems from Letters IV, ll. 27-30, Clarendon Press, p. 306. Blake and Boehme both speak also of a "three-fold vision" corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity, and even of a "four-fold" when the Divine Wisdom or Idea is added.

[2] "I do not doubt interiors have their interiors—and that the eyesight has another eyesight and the hearing another hearing and the voice another voice." Whitman, *Assurances.*

[3] Compare Schopenhauer:
"Die objective Betrachtung ihrer mannigfaltigen wundersamen Gestalten und ihres Thuns und Treibens ist ein lehrreiches Lexicon aus dem groszen Buche der Natur, ist eine Entzifferung der wahren signatura rerum." (Welt als W. u. V. III 44.)

Here Boehme follows the ancient alchemistic tradition as stated by the thrice great Hermes in the words "Everything that is, is double." [4] As man is equipped with two eyes that he may have a sense of spatial depth, so Boehme's two eyes, the temporal and the eternal, one to see the surface and the other to pierce below it, gave to his world depth of meaning and tense dramatic interest not possible to either eye alone.

That by which man knows the external and historical both in religion and nature Boehme calls *"Vernunft,"* while the internal and significant is known through *"Verstand."* [5] *Vernunft* "is a treasure above all the treasures of this world" (Gellas. 1:19), but it can see "only as it were the shadow in a glass." (Clavis 2.) "Dear outer Reason," "own reason," "reason of this world," to give this function some of its titles, is "wavering and imperfect" (M. M. 46:4); it "comprehends nothing of the kingdom of God but the husk" (T. P. 16:30); it "can not see through the tables given to Moses on Mt. Sinai" (T. P. 17:34); it is "only a symbolical existence" (Gnad. 2:1); it "always goes round in a circle on the outside of things (M. M. 2:4); it "is a mirror image of eternity" (Gelass. 1:9); and "stands always in doubt" (Inc. III, 8:7); "out of it comes all strife" (Christ. Test II, 1:1); it "knows the essence of the world, but not the centre of motion" (M. M. 10:4); it "stands in the Magia of Nature, not in the freedom of God." (Inc. III, 3:2.)

The chief limitation of *Vernunft* is its inability to see how apparent contradictions may be reconciled. "How," Reason asks, "can a good God make an evil world?" Reason says,

[4] Hermes Trismegistus, *Poemander*, I, 30.

[5] I shall for the sake of clearness use these terms for the two functions. Boehme uses many terms. Thus *Verstand* is also called *Erkenntniss, Wissenschaft, Erleuchtung,* etc. Sometimes *Vernunft* is *"eigene Verstand."*

"If this world is so dangerous for man why has God put him in it, why has he created it, why has God not turned the devil into nothing again since his fall?" (T. P. 7:15.) Many parts of Boehme's works are cast in the form of a dialogue between *Vernunft* and *Verstand.* For instance in the *göttlicher Beschaulichkeit, Vernunft* proposes difficulties which *Verstand* "answers."

> Reason says, "I hear much mention made of God, that there is a God who has created all things, but I have not yet seen any nor heard from the lips of any that hath seen God, or that could tell where God dwells or is or how he is. For when Reason looks upon the existence of this world and considers that it fares with the righteous as with the wicked . . . then it thinks, all things happen by chance."
>
> Answer. "Reason is a natural life, whose ground lies in a temporal beginning and end and cannot enter into the supernatural ground wherein God is understood. For though Reason thus views itself in this world, and in its viewing finds no other ground, yet it *finds in itself* a desire after a higher ground wherein it may rest."

On the whole, Reason in Boehme's writings seems to be condemned for partial truth rather than untruth. It knows "outwardly after the Form" but not "inwardly after the power." Accordingly, to *Vernunft,* God appears as "merely a nothing." (M. M. 43:3.) Nevertheless true knowledge is potentially in it for Reason "finds in itself a desire after a higher ground . . . this signifies that the hidden God cannot be of the nature of perceptibility since Reason cannot see him." Reason therefore "seeks rest in that which is not in itself" in order that "that which has created it may take it from its suffering into itself." "O blind Reason, rise from thy cradle, art not thou a child of thy mother and an heir to the goods." (T. F. L. 6:39.) *Vernunft* often appears as the dwelling place of *Verstand,* its localization in space and time.

For we should observe what the spirit of the outward world is; it is a house and instrument of the inner spiritual world which is hidden therein, and works through the outer world and brings itself into images. Thus Reason is a house of the true understanding of the divine knowledge. (Clavis 115-116.)

Boehme frequently identifies *Vernunft* with the *"eigener Wille."* It is the out-going, self-assertive will which finds only external multiplicity, not internal unity. The "own-will" aims at the particular rather than the universal and is condemned to the hopeless task of particularizing itself in objects which can never realize its longing. Only the inner universal life, the object of the resigned will, can really satisfy it; nevertheless it flies from one external object to another in a vain endeavor to find rest. Reason, unless it is fulfilled by higher knowledge, can never get away from the world of forms and shadows in which it is imprisoned by egoism. *"Eigene-Vernunft* rules the outward world without the spirit and will of God, according to its own self-will—it gives God fair words, but remains outside Him." (40Q. 1:177.) "The will of reason must be broken: it must be a *living movement of the will* which breaks through reason and which strives against reason—for God's will must be lord over reason, if reason is to be worthy to stand before God." (Inc. 3:3.) It is the rationality of selfishness and the apparent irrationality of resignation which permit Boehme to identify Reason with the "own" or egoistic will. This aspect of *Vernunft* appears at first sight to be a confusion of ethical and non-ethical concepts. Boehme's world is, however, ethical throughout. *Vernunft* wholly isolated from *Verstand* becomes evil. We shall discuss this point at greater length in Chapter VII. The devil, it will be shown, is an excellent logician and nothing seems more illogical to him

than the Christian paradox that he "that saveth his life shall lose it."

As *Vernunft* is the external human point of view, *Verstand* is the internal Divine point of view. What is opaque and meaningless and full of contradictions to *Vernunft* is transparent to *Verstand* because *Vernunft* attempts to go through the external to the internal while *Verstand* works through inner unity outward. *Vernunft* struggles in vain from multiplicity to unity, *Verstand* beginning at unity sees reality as a whole filled with interrelated forms. Thus *Vernunft* is conceptual thought and *Verstand* is mystical experience.[6] *Verstand* internalizes the external. It sinks into the lowest depths of the dark abyss within the soul, and rises up with God's life to a deeper understanding of the same objects dealt with by *Vernunft.* It can see the meaning of things because it has come out of the source of all meanings. The transition from the partial point of view to God's point of view is the crossing of the deepest abyss in nature, where *Vernunft* is crucified and all particularity renounced that *Verstand* may rise to profounder understanding.

Boehme accordingly often makes *Verstand* appear to be merely a better and fuller Reason than *Vernunft.* Thus one argument is answered by another in his dialogues.

> Reason says, "Why has God created a painful and suffering life?" Answer, "Nothing without contrariety can become manifest to itself—A single thing can know nothing more than a one, and even though it is in itself good, yet it knows neither evil nor good." (Besch. 1:7.)

Here we are again facing the paradox of mysticism. Mystical knowledge claims to be above reason, yet it must become reasonable if it is to be communicated to others. On the

[6] Compare: "The better we conceive things the less we understand them." Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 373.

whole Boehme sees this clearly. His object is not to abolish reason but to make it the outward expression of a deeper truth than it can find within itself. Symbol and reality are both necessary, but the latter must be the controlling factor. Reason can be kept if it is in proper ethical relation to that deeper "reason" which is the will of God.

> Reason will speculate and say that we forbid man the knowledge whereby men govern life. . . . Unto it we declare that nothing is abolished in man but the beast-like will of self . . . which has set itself in God's place. . . . We teach that man must wholly die to the anti-christian image that he may be born again in Christ, with a new life and will, which new will has power in the formed word of nature to see and behold with divine eyes all the manifestations of God in nature. (M. M. 36:74.)

A discussion of what Boehme means by *will* and *imagination* may make the matter clearer. As life is Boehme's organizing concept so will is his ultimate. All things are either wills or the imagination that is the objectification of wills. Matter is will contracted on itself. Imagination is will going forth to create. Life is the higher unity arising out of the opposition of will to itself.

> Every life is essential and is based on will. . . . Will is the motive power of the essences. . . . Will is dumb without life, wherein is no feeling, understanding or substantiality. . . . Thus life is the essence's son and will is the essence's father, for no essence can arise without will. (S. P. 1:1-6.)

"Essence" is accordingly the intermediate stage between will and life.

This voluntarism made strong appeal to the Romanticists. If the classic spirit is the influence of thought on will, the romantic is the influence of will on thought. The fear of Spinozism which inspired Romanticists of the post-Kantian period, and the dread of logical, mechanical, and teleological

absolutism which inspires the more modern pragmatist and humanist movement had its counterpart in the days of Boehme in the horrors of the Protestant dogma of predestination. Throughout Boehme's speculations we trace the drama of the free human will struggling to realize its deepest aspirations and striving to create an environment which will bring satisfaction and peace. Will is omnipotent, omnipresent, free and eternal. Nothing can oppose it except another will. "By will God created heaven and earth and a mighty will such as His is hidden in the soul." (T. F. L. 8:18.)

All things are generated out of will and are re-propagated in will for will is the master of every work. It has its origin out of God the Father towards nature, and passes through nature to his heart which is the end of nature. (T. F. L. 4:48.)

The will shapes its own form in the spirit; it can give to the body another form out of the centre of nature, for the inner is the lord of the outer, . . . it can make out of it a devil and out of the devil an angel. (40Q. 6:10-14.)

Will is omnipresent. All objects in nature are vector quantities; incarnate wills pointing beyond themselves. "You know from reason that where there is a root, there is a desiring will which is the noble tincture that driveth upward out of itself and seeketh a similitude of its form." (40Q. 1:332.) Boehme applies the term "will" so widely that it appears as the mere form of activity.[7] It is simply movement seen from the inside, just as nature is movement seen from the outside.

We get closer to what Boehme means by "will" in such expressions as "The Will is thin as nothing and quiet as a nothing." (S. P. 1:7.) "It exists and exists not, it is not

[7] Boehme derives *"wollen"* to "will" from *wallen* to "move about," "to agitate," thus identifying will and activity.

a spirit, but a form of spirit." (S. P. 1:9.) No behaviorist of modern times could be more emphatic that pure will is beyond all possibility of observation. Yet for Boehme, the introspectionist, will is ultimate for the reason that it is at the limit of the furthest reach of introspection.[8] If it could be observed it would still be a *"Grund"* not an *"Ungrund."*

The "abysmal will" in Boehme's philosophy is the ultimate inner nature of being. It is known immediately, and so, as pure subjectivity, all distinction of subject and object in the act of knowing it disappears. Boehme's explanations are all historico-genetic. Things develop and grow, inspired by irrational wills and do not move along fixed logical lines. Will, as substratum of nature, manifests itself in all things —stones, vegetables, animals, men. As we shall see in our next chapter, blind will is force, either attraction, repulsion or rotation. It becomes conscious life in actualizing an idea.

Pure, naked, aimless will is Boehme's dark "abyss" at the basis of all things. It is at the opposite extreme of the "Ineffable One" of the negative mystics, for it is the lowest stage of the cosmic process. For the Neo-Platonist the Absolute One is highest heaven, but for Boehme it may be the lowest depth of hell. This abyss is a point through which every soul must pass if it is to begin life afresh for it must start where God starts in order to be reborn into His Light. The soul finds itself in hell only if the rebirth fails to take place.

Boehme bases his argument for freedom on the theory that the human will is a "nothing" and rises up out of the primordial abyss which is the source of all things. Reason is

[8] "The core of character even of human character is felt more and more to lie in its judgments, preferences, decisions, purposes, which constantly are experienced but never can be seen or heard or handled and therefore cannot be imagined." Stratton, *Psychology of the Religious Life*, p. 227.

bound to its external objects, but will is based on nothing but itself. Boehme often calls the "abyss" the "liberty." It is free to manifest itself as it will.

> The soul's free will is as thin as a nothing. . . . If faith would work it must conceive (fassen, in sense of objectify) itself into something wherein it may work. God's free will has conceived itself through the spiritual world and works through it, and the spiritual world's free will has conceived itself through the outward world and works through it. Even so the soul's free will which also has its origin out of the abyss conceives itself into something whereby it may become. (M. M. 27:6.)

Thus will is primary and unconditioned, its manifestation or objectification is secondary and conditioned. In some such fashion Kant defended freedom by placing it in the supersensuous. Boehme, however, does not seem to have any real understanding of the force of the arguments against freedom and it is not apparent that in his book on "Election by Grace" (*Von der Gnadenwahl*) he is very successful in attacking the doctrine of predestination. He generally resorts to analogies.

> I show blind reason a thistle which the sun touches for a whole day and gives it power and light and yet it remains a thistle. So is the godless will. The divine sun shines upon it for its life's day, but its ground is the substance of a thistle. (M. M. 61:67.)

The will has chosen its own form and all God's power cannot change it.

"God has not willed the fall of man but the will-spirit of man which is as free as God Himself." (Ep. 11:51.) "Each man is his own God and also his own devil." (Inc. I, 5:133.)

On its lowest or abysmal level Boehme's will appears to be the instinctive striving which is called to-day "conation," a blind undifferentiated craving, divorced even from the

vaguest awareness of an end to be attained. It is simple and unanalyzable, a sense of tension, which never occurs by itself at the introspective level. Boehme, like Schopenhauer, finds such a will to be the inner side of phenomena, existing as blind force at the lowest level in external nature and reaching its highest degree of temporal self-consciousness in man. Boehme's philosophy is a history of will striving to know itself—beginning as a "nothing," a formless abyss; acquiring its first vague content or "thickening" in desire; then by its inner conflict, which is nature, it breaks through nature into the light of self-consciousness; and finally reaches its goal completely harmonized through a content which satisfies all its longings. The first contrast produced, that of will and desire, begins the dialectic process which generates nature and deity.

> The Ungrund is an eternal Nothing but makes an eternal beginning as a desire . . . then is this will a magician for it has found in the nothing, something and so now it has a place for its dwelling. . . . The will is an insensitive, incognitive life, but the desire is found by the will and is a being in the will . . . The eternal Will-Spirit is God [9] and the moving life of the desire is nature. For there is nothing prior and each is a cause of the other. Thus the Will-Spirit is an eternal knowing of the Ungrund and the life of desire an eternal body of the will. (Mys. Pan. 1:3.)

The process by which will passes over from "nothing" to "something" Boehme calls "imagination." This "imagination" is not the *"Einbildung"* which implies fancy and pretense, nor is it *"Phantasie,"* [10] for Boehme's devil "remains ever a prince at the head of his legions, but only in the

[9] God as unmanifested. More often when Boehme speaks of God he means God as manifested, the other end of the evolutionary process. The contrast between will and desire is only the first vague embodiment of will, to be succeeded by higher manifestations.

[10] For a similar comparison of Imagination and Fancy see Inge's quotation from Ruskin, *Christian Mysticism,* p. 252.

realm of fancy." (Gnad. 4:36.) "Imagination" is indeterminate will becoming determinate. It is empty form becoming filled with content. Boehme speaks of will as "centering" itself in some object which thereupon becomes the "*Wesen*" of the will—for "every imagination makes substance." (*Wesenheit*) (T. F. L. 10:48.)

> Where no substance is there is no creating, for a creating spirit is no conceivable substance, but it must draw substance into itself through its imagination else it would not subsist. (Inc. I, 5:59.)

Human imagination is the temporal repetition of the eternal process by which the "*Ungrund*" goes over into the "*Grund,*" the "abyss" into the "byss." Schopenhauer's term "objectification of the will" seems to be close to what Boehme means by "imagination," though Boehme, of course, has no conception of the Kantian categories through which Schopenhauer's "will" objectifies itself. Boehme has his own "categories." These are the "seven nature forms" as described in the next chapter. Through them will attains its goal of complete self-knowledge.

In facing the central problem of the manner in which the will becomes objectified we meet a difficulty. We are asked to view the process from an eternal, not a temporal, standpoint. From a temporal standpoint the will precedes its manifestation and causes it. Eternally, will and manifestation determine each other. Neither precedes the other. To know the process from the eternal point of view we must leave "external reason" behind and merge our wills in a timeless life. "In the centrum of the eternal and temporal nature," says Boehme, "the beginning and end are all one. Therein the soul finds rest for it sees the whole wheel at once. (*das Rad ganz.*)" (Apol. I, 23.)

But Boehme's efforts to see "the whole wheel at once"

give little of this rest to his readers. In the doctrine of the seven nature forms we shall find this difficulty particularly prominent. Boehme can begin at either end of his seven or with any one of them and produce the others out of it. Thus we find in chapter 10 of the *Aurora* that a nature form

> gives birth to its father and mother as its father and mother bear it, . . . for one spirit alone can not generate another nor can two of them do it, but the birth of one takes place through the operation of all seven, six of them always generate the seventh, and if one of them were not the others would not be.
>
> If I sometimes take only two or three to produce a spirit, I do that only because of my weakness for I cannot hold all seven in my corrupted brain at once in their perfection. I see all seven very well, but when I look into them (*in sie speculire*), then the spirit rises in the midst of the fountain where Life generates itself, which goes *now upwards now downwards,* and so all seven can not be comprehended in one thought but only part at a time (*stückweise*).

Boehme apparently makes no other distinction between time and eternity than just this distinction between seeing things *"stückweise"* or in *"das Rad ganz."* His "eternity" is not an indefinitely extended time. Adam's fall was a fall from eternity to time, that is from seeing things as interrelated wholes or as organisms to seeing them successively as casually or mechanically related.

> We cannot say of man that he in the beginning was enclosed in time for he was in eternity. God had created him in his image, but he fell; so the power of time seized him where all things stand *in number, measure and weight* and the same clock work is the outspoken formed word of God, according to love and anger, wherein lies the whole creation together with man according to nature. (Gnad. 7:51.)

The primordial fall from an eternal or organic to a "clockwork" or mechanical world is important in Boehme's theory of knowledge. Our task in seeking truth is to reverse the process of the fall and attain a divine point of view; that

is, *Verstand.* Adam fell into matter, that is from universality to particularity. His descendants see as separate what is one in God. Boehme as a son of Adam is compelled sometimes to describe object as the creation of will and sometimes will as determined by its object. But, however unable he may be to express it, he knows in his heart that the two are interrelated in the higher unity of *spirit* or *life.* Life cannot be known by "reason" (*Vernunft*) but only by itself, that is, by *Verstand.*

Here we reach the most obscure point in Boehme's philosophy. He labors ceaselessly to make himself clear, but only succeeds in uttering one paradox after another. Thus we read that the eternal will

> is in nothing but is the mirror of the Abgrund and seeks itself and finds itself, and the found seeks again a model wherein it can seek, find, and see itself. Then the last again finds the first in itself, and the last is a mirror of the first and the first of the last and it is an eternal "Band" (a word used by Boehme for an interrelated process) and consists in will and desire, seeking and finding. (40Q. 1:202.)

Innumerable passages like this could be cited. They apparently mean that will is itself dualistic and exists by overcoming an inner dualism. Will seeks two ends, a negative and a positive, an internal and an external. It passively accepts an external object and at the same time actively creates it. Such is Boehme's voluntaristic mysticism. The out-going "self-will" seeks to create, the in-going "resigned will" passively accepts objectivity. In the two together we have a circular process by which "the end continually seeks the beginning" (40Q. 1:225) "for the world is in time. It proceeds to a goal and there the end finds the beginning." (40Q. 1:218.) In this way the mystical paradox is solved, not by reason, but by life, for life is the strange paradox

which bridges the antinomy between matter and spirit; it is the Holy Ghost, the mediator between the Father and the Son, the origin and the goal.

In the passive phase of the will its "imagination" is much like our modern "effort of attention." According to the theory involved in this phrase any idea which excludes all others from the field of attention discharges in action. In this way the will accepts its object and becomes immersed in the life stream of reality. Thus will takes on the form of that on which it is "centered," to use Boehme's oft-recurring word.

"To whatever the mind inclines itself, in that is it figured in the eternal fiat." Imagination is thus the food of the soul and man is evil or good according to whether he "imagines" himself into the dark or light world.

> Outer Being does not reach the inner soul except through imagination; otherwise there is nothing in this world which can touch or kill the soul neither fire nor sword, but only imagination; that is its poison. (40Q. 11:7.)

Adam and Lucifer both fell because they put their imagination on the material rather than the spiritual.

> How happened it that Adam though a perfect image of God lost his perfection and became earthly? Did it not happen through imagination that he introduced his desire into the outer earthly and elementary realm? . . . So it goes also with the new birth. Through imagination and earnest desire we are again impregnated with deity and receive a new body in the old. (Informatiorum II, 7:8.)

But this passive process by which the undetermined will is "impregnated" by objects is always accompanied by a creative process through which the will determines itself and so brings its hidden possibilities to manifestation. Not only does structure determine function, but function determines

structure. To the active will nature is a "mirror" in which the soul sees its deepest longing reflected from the inner depths. The world of external objects is not merely the world of the senses. It is also the world in which the possible lies hidden behind the sensual, a mirror world of imagination which becomes actualized as the will breaks through nature and so comes to a deeper knowledge of itself. Outer nature points toward an inner ideal world which the will posits in order to create it, and so attain a more complete self-consciousness.

> For the beginning of all being is nothing else than an imagination of the *Ungrund,* whereby it introduces itself through its own desire in an imagination and models, forms and sets itself into images and from the eternal one breathes out to its self-observation. (Chr. Test 1:5.)

In this way the will comes *"in eine Selbstbeschaulichkeit Empfindlichkeit und Findlichkeit zu seinen Selbstbewegungen und Formen."* This active phase of will through which it creates its own world is to be described in more detail when we come to consider how the "abysmal" or indeterminate will passes over into the "formed" or determinate will in God's act of creation.

Boehme in this way discovers a volitional element in knowledge. Volition is an identification of subject and object in an action where all sense of otherness is lost because each penetrates and determines the other. It is therefore the only true and immediate knowledge, the only path from symbol to reality, from *Vernunft* to *Verstand,* from an historical faith to a living faith, from nature to spirit. It is the rebirth of the soul from darkness to light, which does not banish darkness, but makes it the material basis of the light's manifestation. This double character of the will by

which it is at once active and passive, self-assertive yet self-denying, is the eternally inherent contradiction which must be overcome in order to make true knowledge possible. Boehme not only sees it as the basis of the soul which exists by the unfortunate necessity of particularizing itself in external forms which limit its inner freedom, but he sees it on its lowest level as the conflict between the forces of attraction and expansion, which is the blind life of external nature. The often quoted phrase from Boehme, "In yes and no all things consist" (Th. Fr. 3:2) or such statements as "Nothing without contrariety can become manifest to itself" (Beschau. 1:8) are based on this dual character of knowledge, as implying two opposite movements, a contraction and expansion.

> In Nature one thing is always set against another, not to the end that it might be at enmity with itself, but that one might reveal itself in the other. Thus the Great Mystery comes to differentiation and the nothing works and plays in and with something. (Gnad. 2:22.)

Boehme defines a soul as that in which this double process takes place. He says:

> it is a thing which is without ground, but seeks and makes a ground in itself and has its origin and dwelling in the original conception in which it first conceives itself in itself; that is its innermost limit, and it goes out of itself and seeks before itself where it makes a mirror like the others, until it finds the first groundless limit again. (40Q. 11:1.)

The objectification of the will is often compared to speaking in which one thought images itself in many words. Speaking is thus the forming of the formless.

> This breathing is the eternal Word of the ungrounded Godhead as an outspeaking of the Ungrund in the Grund, the unsubstantial in the substantial: in which the whole creation takes and will eter-

nally take its beginning in the outspeaking in the differentiation of speech. All Life stands in the same differentiation of speech, where the formed imagination divides itself in the outbreathing into differentiation, in which dividing is understood the sensuality of the one life, where the one beholds itself in the many.

Speaking is an excellent illustration of this dual character of knowledge. Thoughts determine words and the words in turn determine thoughts and the result is an interaction of the two.

Knowledge is possible because the will does not penetrate that which is wholly alien to itself. Will is one parent of its object.

> Our mind is an indissoluble bond which God breathed into Adam out of the eternal mind by the fiat of the moving spirit and so is our eternal essence a particular or a spark out of the eternal mind . . . It continues in the darkness and makes all light in itself and where it is there it sees. So our thoughts can regard a thing many miles away, far from the body, where the body has never been. The glance goes through wood and stone, through bones and marrow, and nothing can stop it for it breaks the darkness everywhere without breaking the body of anything, and the will is the horse whereon it rides. (T. P. 16:6-7.)

> For every Spirit sees no deeper than the realized forms wherein it works, which it has made actual through imagination. Therein it forms itself, and in such essence it beholds itself and so high is its knowledge. (Chr. Test. 1:16.)

The active phase of the will through which in knowing its object it also knows itself is coherent with the old mystical doctrine that "like can only know like." True knowledge is self-knowledge; therefore the possibility of true knowledge implies that man is the epitome of the universe. "As Empedocles said, like can only be known by like, only nature can understand itself, only nature can fathom itself; but only spirit also can understand spirit." [11] There is much in

[11] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Idea,* I, 288.

Boehme that parallels this. "Every spirit," he says, "sees no further than its own mother from which it had its original and wherein it stands, for it is impossible for any spirit in its own natural power to look into another principle and behold it, except it be reborn therein." [12] (T. P. 7:1.)

Since man is in all three worlds, the celestial, the sidereal, and the terrestrial, it follows that he can have a knowledge of all three.

As the soul comprehends the inner eternal nature and the spirit or God's noble image apprehends the birth of the angelic light-world and the sidereal or elementary spirit conceives the birth and property of the stars and elements, every eye sees into its own mother wherein it was born. Let none account it impossible seeing man is an image of God, a likeness of the Being of all Beings. (Sig. Rer. 3:8.)

Boehme constantly reminds the reader that his writings cannot be understood by anyone who has not been reborn out of the dark world of nature into the light world of spirit. "My writings," he says, "transcend sidereal knowledge, they lay hold of the divine birth, therefore he must have a like spirit who would understand them." Accordingly "the devil lends man his eyes to see evil, even as God lends him his eyes to see good." (Inc. 7:23.) Boehme attempts to explain how the mind finds itself in its object.

If the mind did not flow out of itself it would have no sense perception and if it had no sense perception then it would have no knowledge of itself nor of any other thing and could neither work nor act. But the efflux of the mind which is an object of the mind, in which the mind finds itself causes it to will and desire. Hence it introduces the senses into a something which is, as it were, a *centrum* of selfhood. Here the mind works through the senses and thereby reveals and contemplates itself. (Beschau. 1:18.)

[12] Compare with this the following passage from Plotinus: "One kind of intelligence is the intellectual perception of another thing, but another is the perception of a thing by itself, the latter of which flies in a greater degree from duplicity or doubleness of intellection." Plotinus, Enn. V.

Because of this subjective contribution of the mind to the objects which it knows, Boehme can say:

> My writings exist only for the end that a man may learn to know himself, what he is and what he was in the beginning. (T. P. 3:3.)
>
> If I had no other book than only the book which I am myself so I have books enough. The whole Bible lies in me if I have Christ's spirit. If I read myself I read God's book and you my brothers are the alphabet which I read in myself, for my mind and will finds you within me. I wish from my heart you would also find me. (Apol. II, 298.)

From such voluntaristic epistemology it follows that man is a microcosm. In a similar manner the Romanticists said that nature is "an encyclopædic systematic index or plan of our Spirit." [13] Man, thought Boehme, as he was created on the sixth day, is under the sign of Venus, and it was love or the *Venusbegierde* which drew all things together into the new human entity. So Boehme can say to man, "Thou standest in the supersensible and rulest in the sensible, over that out of which all creatures are created; and thou mayest fear nothing on earth for thou art like all things and nothing is unlike thee." (Supers. 8.) There is no monastic asceticism in this. It is a philosophy which calls for the greatest activity in the world around us. Boehme is constantly impressed with the infinite possibilities of man. He often repeats, "We are children of eternity." (T. F. L. 6:45.) The evidence of this eternity is in the mighty power of thought.

> There are a limited number of stars whereby we know they must return again into the æther . . . but man is measureless for in the constellations of the mind numberless thoughts arise, for out of one thought others go forth as many as the stars in the firmament, wherein we know our eternity. (T. F. L. 6:44.)

Man is "not a separated spark like a piece out of the whole

[13] Novalis Frag. 364, quoted by Ederheimer, p. 71.

but the whole altogether, just as in every point there is a whole." (T. F. L. 6:50.) This last statement indicates that Boehme believed in some sense that the whole is present in all its parts. He goes on to say:

If you make a little circle as small as a grain of seed, so the whole birth of the eternal nature is therein and also the Trinity (6:45). And as you see and find a man to be, so also is eternity. Observe him in body and soul, in good and evil, in joy and sorrow, in light and darkness, in power and weakness, in life and death. All is in man, heaven, earth, stars, elements and also the Trinity of the Godhead, nor can anything be named that is not in man. All creatures are in him both in this world and in the angelical world. We are all, together with the Being of all Beings, only one body with many members where every member is again a whole, and yet is an individual. (T. F. L. 6:49.)

We find somewhat the same expression in Schopenhauer when he says:

"The will reveals itself as completely and as much in one oak as in millions . . . the thing-in-itself is present entire and undivided in every object of nature and in every living being." [14]

Boehme scandalized many pious souls by his extraordinary claims for man. "God," he says, "is the Being of all Beings and we are gods in him through which he reveals himself." (T. F. L. 6:5.)

The holy Trinity without end or being has revealed itself as an image in a being and that is Christ and we are his limbs; we are gods, if we remain in him. (T. F. L. 13:22.) When you draw up by faith to God then you break through to heaven and lay hold on God at his holy heart. Then when this is done you are as the whole or total God and are such a person as the whole God in the place of this world. (A. 23:13.)

When Boehme says, "If I take up a stone or a clod of earth and look upon it, then I see the whole world therein"

[14] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Idea,* Vol. I, p. 67. Trans. by Haldane.

(M. M. 2:6), he means that such knowledge is only possible to a man who is "reborn" into the life of God. Man knows divine things only by identifying himself with the divine. "Not I, the I that I am, knows these things, but God knows them in me." (Apol. 2:72.) "I am not climbed up into the Deity, but the Deity has climbed up into me." (A. 18:8.) Yet Boehme insists that man retains his individuality even though he becomes a part of the larger life.

God leads no new or strange spirit into us, but with his Spirit he opens our spirit: that is the hidden things of the Divine wisdom which lie in every man. (Ep. to. C. Lindner.)

Communication between men is possible because all men are rooted in one eternal spirit.

All human properties proceed from one, so that they have only one root and mother, otherwise one man could not understand the speech of another . . . In speech it may be understood into what the Spirit has created itself, in evil or good, and with the same manifestation it goes into the form of another man and awakens in the other such a form in the signature that both forms act together to form one form (mit einander inqualiren) so that there is one comprehension, one will, and one understanding . . . The signature of nature is in its form a dumb essence; it is a prepared instrument of music on which the will's spirit plays, whatever strings it touches sound according to their property, . . . man wants nothing but the wise master, the true spirit of eternity who can strike his instrument for that is the mind's natural knowledge of itself. (Sig. Rer. 1:1-5.)

Thus even our knowledge of each other is, in a sense, self-knowledge, or rather God's knowledge of himself through us.

It follows from what has been said about Boehme's epistemology, that his psychology and theology are practically identical. The knowledge of God is self-knowledge. Boehme would accordingly be ready to admit an accusation

made against him that his philosophy is an account of his own psychological processes. What else, he would probably say, can one know about the creative process except that which is revealed in the one example directly known to us, ourselves. Reason, thinks Boehme, gives us only external dead nature, no life nor generation, yet it is a mirror of the spirit and in it man can find himself. He does this, not through Reason, but by a living act of will through which he projects his own psychological processes into external nature. They do not return to him void, but filled with living content. The indeterminate will sees in the heart of nature its idea, that is, a mirror of what it may become. As such it is Reason, restless and unsatisfied. It then goes forth and through imagination, it becomes clothed with substance, through a living union with the eternal Idea. The Son, born of this marriage of masculine will and feminine idea, is a new will which is at once natural and spiritual because it is living. This is *Verstand,* the knowledge or life of the internal as well as the external, the union of subjective and objective.

Boehme's philosophy is confessedly autobiographic. "The task of philosophy," says Watson,[15] "is to state in the explicit form of reflection, that which is implicit in the life and action of good men."

> Let us be at one [says Hocking] with our saints as in reality we are at one with them in the drama of their moral will . . . The settlement of thy problem, St. Augustine, which looks so much like a theoretical result, is it not in truth an inevitable moral decision governed from afar by thy deep religious feeling playing itself out in terms of speculative issues which only symbolize the inner meaning of the process? [16]

[15] Watson, *Schelling,* p. 245.
[16] Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* p. 75.

No statement of Boehme's own theoretical result could be truer than this.

Before we leave Boehme's theory of knowledge something further must be said about the doctrine of the three worlds—the dark world, the light world and this temporal existence which is sometimes called the "fire world." The first two are eternal, the third exists in time. Man is in all three; his soul in the dark world, his spirit in the light world and his body in the temporal order. He is thus higher than the angels who know only the light and the devils who know only darkness. In man the threefold world is revealed. The blind struggling self-will is in darkness; the will universalized, harmonized and determined by a complete knowledge of itself is in the light and the human body is born of the interaction of the two.

To these three worlds or three modes of activity three kinds of knowledge correspond. Knowledge in the dark world is sensual, knowledge in the light world is divine intuition, knowledge in the fire world is rational. The second, or as Boehme calls it, *"Die hochtheure Pforte von göttlicher Beschaulichkeit,"* is not knowledge in the usual sense of the term, but life itself wherein God knows himself in the soul and the soul knows itself in God. Thus in addition to the two types of knowledge recognized by psychology, namely the sensual and the rational, which merge into each other, Boehme recognizes a third type called *Verstand,* which arises out of mystical union with the divine.

It is difficult to reconcile all that Boehme says regarding the three types of knowledge and the three corresponding worlds. This preliminary sketch will be rendered more intelligible in a later discussion of Boehme's seven forms of nature. He took over the three worlds from alchemy, but

the seven forms are the result of his own investigations and comprise a clearer and more consistent theory. His insistence on sharp distinctions between the three worlds simplifies his analysis, but renders its result less complex than life itself. Throughout his writings he assumes in all experience some grade of blind nature-will outwardly directed in combination with some grade of mystical knowledge inwardly directed. These two produce a third type of experience which partakes of both. The will objectifies itself in progressively higher and higher forms. Knowledge in the dark world which is the experience of naked energy and knowledge in the light world which is the experience of the inner life of the universe furnish the lower and upper asymptotic limits. The temporal world includes all possible intermediate grades of objectification of the will. Hell and heaven are the lower and upper limits immanent in the temporal world. On its pilgrim's progress through time the soul alternates between the eternity of the lower and the eternity of the higher.

Between the two limits of the threefold will hovers reason which is "half dead," for it is tied on one side to dead matter, yet it hungers always for the fullness of life in the light world, which is immanent within it. It is thus an intermediate stage between sensual and mystical experience. As such an intermediary it is sometimes spoken of as if it had a semi-material body. Boehme probably derived this curious idea from Paracelsus. According to this theory man has two bodies, one composed of the elements and the other "from the stars." The inner semi-corporeal body is the sphere of the mind and senses and so is a mediator between matter and spirit. Boehme conceives of a "*Vernunftleben*" throughout all nature which he also calls, to give it a few

of its names, an *astrum,* a *Naturgeist,* a *Weltseele,* the *spiritus mundi.* Man's psychic life is a part of this more universal nature life radiating from the stars. Perhaps the following is as clear as any of the very obscure and somewhat inconsistent statements about it.

> This twofold outward body is now to be considered if we would understand nature . . . The sidereal body is the highest excepting the divine in man; the elemental body is its dwelling house, . . . The elemental body is inanimate and void of understanding, it has only desire in it, vegetation is its right life. The astrum gives knowledge of all essences in the elements. . . . The inward light and power of the light gives in man the right divine understanding, but . . . the sidereal spirit is the true rational life in all creatures. The whole astrum is the instrument whereby the eternal speaking Word speaks and forms externally, it is a great harmony of unsearchable manifold voices, . . . the desire or Fiat receives this sound and makes it substantial. This substance is the spirit of the stars which the elements receive into themselves and coagulate it in themselves and hatch it as a hen her eggs; therefrom is the true rational life in the elements. (M. M. 11:22-27.)

Much might be said of Boehme's theory regarding the various grades of corporeality, but it does not seriously concern the problems we are at present discussing. It is an important part of the outworn physics of alchemy.

The duality of the two opposite phases of the will becomes threefold when their interaction has produced a new being. This new being as directly experienced is life. But life cannot be directly experienced for long. Soon it becomes indirectly experienced from the outside and the duality breaks out again. As indirectly experienced it is reason, a mirror or idea in which the will sees the possibilities of its next act reflected. The whole process is then repeated in the next movement of will. Boehme sometimes describes this process in theological terms. The Father, that is the dark principle

or blind will, sees in the passive idea, that is, the Virgin, the possibility of creation. Their union results in the Son, that is, the light principle or determinate self-conscious will. The interaction of Father and Son, or nature-will and spirit-will produces the Holy Spirit which is life. When the inevitable duality reappears, life as viewed externally or rationally becomes idea. The whole series is then repeated. Such a brief summary of this theological psychology does not convey its full import. It will become clearer as we analyze in the two following chapters Boehme's conception of evolution from nature and God and the return process from God to nature.

Boehme's theory of *Verstand* and *Vernunft,* the two types of knowledge, suggests an obvious criticism. He defines *Verstand* as pure experience of the higher life. It provides a profounder truth than *Vernunft* or reason. But truth and experience are not the same thing. Truth is an interpretation or judgment upon experience. Mere experience, devoid of such an interpretation, is meaningless and is neither true nor false. In *Vernunft* subject and object are separated. Accordingly *Vernunft* is doubtful knowledge. In *Verstand* the subjective-objective distinction has been transcended, therefore Boehme holds *Verstand* is sure knowledge, for knower and known are one. *Vernunft* mirrors the image of the soul's possibility in the world of objects, *Verstand* realizes that possibility in experience or activity. Boehme's theory is open to question because the words true and false properly apply only to *Vernunft.* If *Vernunft* images a genuine possibility so that *Verstand* completely satisfies it, then it is pragmatically true. If *Vernunft* can find no fulfillment it is false. True and false are only relative terms and signify a relation existing between a judgment and that

about which the judgment is made. They necessitate the subject-object distinction and cannot be applied to the absolute. Accordingly when Boehme says, "Throw away your outer reason, so is your will God's will and God's Spirit will seek you in you" (40Q. 1:36), or when Eckhart says, "The eternal process is a self-revealing of God in pure knowledge where the knower *is* that which is known" (Schr. u. Pre. I, 124), or when such modern writers as Holt say, "A representation is always partially identical with that which it represents, and completely identical in all those features and respects in which it is a true representation," [17] it is difficult to see how such knowledge is either true or false except in relation to judgments about it, which destroy its character as "pure immediacy." To reiterate the words of Bergson which we have already quoted "Philosophizing just consists in placing one's self by a sort of intuition in the interior of concrete reality." (*op. cit.*, p. 86.) Boehme says the same thing many times; but philosophizing obviously is not such an immersion, it is rather a judgment upon the immersion. Philosophy, therefore, being mediate, not immediate, cannot remove all doubts, and mystic philosophy is quite as much on the surface of things as any other philosophy. Here again we face our well-worn mystic paradox. The mystics do not admit as does Kant, a "dialectical illusion" through which the mind must forever attempt the impossible task of expressing in ideas what is inexpressible, nor do they admit with the scholastics a double standard of truth, that is, a truth for the expressible and another truth for the inexpressible. Rather they openly admit the paradox and say that ultimate truth or immediate knowledge both is and is not. Boehme says that the very existence of the

[17] *Concept of Consciousness*, p. 142.

dilemma means that we are merely philosophizing, and philosophy (*Vernunft*) cannot possibly get us out of it.

> Beloved Reader [he continues], if you would understand the high mysteries you need not put a university upon your nose or any such spectacles. (T. F. L. 3:29.)

The dilemma is evidence of that double aspect of all will which has been pointed out. The whole object of willing is to remove this inner contradiction, to transform the double temporal will into the one eternal will. "The one divine way by which a man may behold God in his Word, Being, and Will is this, man must be at one in himself." (M. M. 41:54.)

Boehme solves the difficulty by taking *Vernunft* with him up into this higher experience. The "one will" of *Verstand* is a harmony, not an identity. His common figure is that of a candle. There is always a dark spot at the heart of every flame. "Faith and doubt are close to each other and are bound with a chain." (Inc. III, 2:2.) Knowledge exists because manifestation is only possible through opposites. The opposites are the out-going active and the in-going passive wills. Knowledge does not cancel the opposites and make them one. "One will," says Boehme, "no knowledge." (T. P. 10:35.) Nor does it leave them a two, for this multiplicity is the "false imagination" of the devil. It makes them a two in one, or rather a trinity of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Reason, left behind in darkness and duality, is reborn through experience into a fuller reason, wherein the old is not lost, but exists as the matter of the new or its hidden basis. *Vernunft* and *Verstand* resemble Plato's two steeds, the higher and lower natures, but Boehme attempts to drive them both to heaven.

A modern analogy may clarify Boehme's distinction between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*. A deaf man could master the mathematical theory of sound. He could also understand the manner in which material objects vibrate in order to produce sound. In this way he understands sound from the outside as a phenomenon in nature. But his knowledge is rational. He does not understand sound from "the inside" as an experience. All that he can possibly learn about harmonic motion gives him no suggestion of the nature of sound as an element in conscious life. An air wave has a double aspect, it is mechanical energy and it is sound. Each is known by a different type of knowledge. To say that sound, as a psychological fact, has also a double aspect, rational and empirical, does not alter the situation. The dualism continually breaks out again. If any object in experience splits into an inner and an outer, then each of these two, on being observed, experiences the same diremption.

In spite of his crude methods of expressing it, Boehme's theory of knowledge contains much with which modern thought would agree. Since Kant few would deny that there is in all knowledge both a subjective and objective element. Boehme is especially profound when he discusses in detail the method by which the soul frees itself from the shadow world of idea and achieves genuine objectivity. This step is the central stage in its evolution from darkness to light, a process which has so far been discussed only in outline. We are now prepared to examine the evolutionary process more closely. Our analysis has so far shown in general terms how an out-going æsthetic mysticism and an in-going religious mysticism are reconciled by a conception that knowledge is a process of interpenetration of each by the other through which experience is progressively interpreted

and reorganized into unity. What Catholicism granted only piecemeal and what Protestantism denied, namely, the divinity of experience, and the experience of divinity, is found to be implied in the character of that knowledge by which the same divine reality reveals itself in nature and man.

What is there hid in the heart of a rose,
Mother mine?
Ah, who knows, who knows, who knows?
A man that died on a lonely hill
May tell you perhaps but no other will,
Little child.

What does it take to make a rose,
Mother mine?
The God that died to make it knows
It takes the world's eternal wars,
It takes the moon and all the stars,
It takes the might of heaven and hell
And the everlasting love as well,
Little child.

ALFRED NOYES, *Forest of Wild Thyme.**

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CHAPTER V

FROM NATURE TO GOD. THE PROBLEM OF EVOLUTION

We are now to inquire in greater detail how the divided will overcomes its duality and rises to a complete and harmonized life. This evolutionary process from the darkness of divided will to the light of unified life can be described either in terms of man or in terms of nature. As man is a microcosm, a cross section of all that is, from the highest to the lowest, he can make discoveries about himself by examining nature or he can make discoveries about nature by examining himself. We shall now proceed to analyze the evolutionary process in terms of nature as in the previous chapter it was discussed principally in terms of man. But we cannot completely separate the two. They are interdependent. The light of knowledge, as has been pointed out, is compounded of inner light in the soul of man and outer light shining upon him from nature.

This persistent duality of inner and outer becomes apparent in another form when we discover that we can begin our analysis at either end of the evolutionary process. Turning upon nature the light of outward knowledge we discover an evolution from the lower to the higher. *Sub specie temporalitatis* Boehme's philosophy is a naturalism. As a student of nature he sees the blind nature-will through its inherent

capabilities overcome its own dualism and rise to the heaven of completely satisfied desire. Conflicting forces of nature are harmonized through the birth of self-conscious unified life within them. But Boehme is also an idealist in the sense that the goal of the evolutionary process inspires its progress. *Sub specie æternitatis* the struggle of nature is not wholly a struggle in the dark. The ideal hovers before the half blind forces creating in them a dissatisfaction and leading them on to greater heights. Thus the nature-will, like its human counterpart, is both active and passive. Actively it creates its goal, passively it is transformed by it. These two points of view are inconsistent only in so far as the two kinds of knowledge are inconsistent. Rationally Boehme is a naturalist, mystically he is an idealist. *Vernunft* sees man and nature evolving from lower to higher forms, but in the light of *Verstand,* nature is an organic interrelated process in which the "end generates the beginning." Thus the mystical paradox keeps reappearing in Protean forms because our analysis must needs remain in the realm of philosophy rather than in the realm of life in which paradoxes are solved by experience. Philosophy can point toward the promised land though, like Moses, it cannot enter in.

We cannot solve philosophic problems merely by referring them to another realm of experience. Boehme takes us further than this facile procedure. He analyzes the whole complicated process by which higher experience evolves out of lower. It is not enough to know that higher experience exists. It is more important to learn how to seek and find it. In the present chapter we shall in the main trace the naturalistic evolution from nature to God and in the next the idealistic emanation from God to nature. It will, however, be found impossible to distinguish sharply between the

two progressions for each involves something of the other. This interpenetration is the heart of Boehme's philosophy. Life exists because dualism continually breaks out in the realm of *Vernunft* only to be overcome in the realm of *Verstand*.

Proceeding therefore *sub specie temporalitatis* or *"stückweise"* as Boehme phrases it, we find that the higher levels of existence arise through successive operations of seven "nature forms" or "qualities," the higher coming out of the lower through a kind of logic of life. Boehme devotes a large share of his books to an explanation of the character and function of these seven forms or "fountain spirits." Commentators have made little effort to relate them to the rest of Boehme's philosophy, probably because of the confusion and obscurity resulting from his descriptions of them. "Few," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* "will take the pains to follow Boehme through the interminable accounts of his seven *Quellgeister.*" Yet the prominence and ubiquity of the great seven indicate their basic importance. The *Aurora* is largely devoted to them. Unlike most of Boehme's other theories, he remains fairly consistent in regard to his interpretation of the seven forms throughout his writings. Only in the case of the fourth do we notice a decided development. Through these forms Boehme can explain anything—the birth of God, the growth of a plant, the fall of Lucifer, the jealousy of lovers, the structure of angels, all that is in "the choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth." Take as a random example the statement that fat people are jovial because of a predominance of the second form. (Aur. 8:18.) All seven forms are in everything, but one is always uppermost or *"primus"* as Boehme sometimes phrases it.

When I take up a stone or a clod of earth and look upon it then I see that which is above and that which is below, yea I see the whole world therein only that in each thing one form happens to be chief and most manifest. According to this each thing is named. All the other forms are jointly therein, only in various degrees and centres, and yet the various degrees and centres are only one centre. (M. M. 2:6.)

These forms are the simplest elements into which Boehme can resolve all knowable existence, material and spiritual; divine, angelic and human.

As an empiricist and a naturalist or *"Naturkundiger"* (Aur. 2:15) Boehme's first task was to find unifying principles in temporal nature. He had inherited from the alchemists the idea of evolution or development [1] and he set out to discover what governed that development. Turning to his first book the *Aurora* we find at the outset that to know God "we must diligently consider the forces of nature." (Aur. 1:1.) These "forces" he also calls qualities (*Qualitäten*) and a quality is defined as the *"Beweglichkeit, Quallen oder Treiben eines Dinges,"* in other words, it is a characteristic form of activity. For example, he says that heat is a quality and it contains two others, light and ferocity. Cold is a quality, so is sweetness, sourness, saltness, etc. Boehme derives *"Qualität"* from *Quallen* or *Quellen,* i.e. *Quell,* a spring or source. With this notion is also associated *Qual* (pain), in this case a birth pang for a quality only comes to manifestation through painful struggle. In the *Aurora* he at first finds only two qualities, good and evil in all things (Aur. 1:3), then he appears to discover an indefinite number (Aur. chaps. I and II), but finally he settles

[1] "The word evolution (Entwicklung) first came into philosophic speech through Jacob Boehme." R. Eucken, *Des Paracelsus Lehren von der Entwicklung.* Philosophische Monatshefte, Vol. 16.

down to seven. (Aur. 8:21.) In choosing seven he not only has Biblical precedence [2] in the seven candlesticks and the seven seals of the Apocalypse (T. F. L. 3:46), but he follows such predecessors as Basilides with his seven impersonators in the mystical Abraxas, Saturninus with his seven star spirits, the hebdomad of Valentinus, and the ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah (which are the Trinity plus seven spirits). Boehme's seven differ from the Gnostic seven. His "qualities" are not arbitrary personifications such as Might, Wisdom, Glory, but are rather of the character of scientific generalizations, arrived at through observation. They are connected by logical relations. They are kinds of energy which operate throughout all things. They incarnate the invisible God and do not, like the Gnostic hierarchies, separate Him from nature. With each of the seven forms Boehme associates one of the seven metals, the seven planets and the seven days of the week and other symbolic groups. In the *Tafeln von den drei Principien göttlicher Offenbarung* (1624) we find forty-five groups of seven, each associated with the seven forms.

The forms appear under many names such as "Essences" (T. P. 25:22), "Spirits of the Eternal Nature" (T. P. 25:22), *"Quellgeister"* (A. 12:20), "Properties" (*Eigenschaften*), (S. R. 9:8), "Forms" (*Gestalten*), (T. P. 25:24), "Species" (Gnad. 3:3), "Forces" (Th. Q. 12:3), "Mothers" (II Inc. 4:4), "Wheels" (A. 13:90). These seven forms comprise

[2] "On the sixth day I commanded my Wisdom to create man from seven consistencies, one his flesh from the earth . . . and seven his spirit from my breath and from the wind." II Enoch 30:8.

"Even these seven which are the eyes of the Lord, they shall run to and fro through the whole earth." Zech. 4:10.

Perhaps Blake was thinking of both Boehme and Zechariah when he wrote: "Then they elected Seven called the Seven Eyes of God and the Seven lamps of the Almighty. *The Seven are one within the other;* the seventh is named Jesus." *The Four Zoas,* I, 242.

all manifested existences visible and invisible, temporal and eternal, because through them the eternal unmanifested will is objectified. "All Being arises through the seven properties." (M. M. 11:10.) "Had not the forces of the one divine property brought themselves into separability nothing would have been possible. Neither angel nor any other creature would have existed." (Gnad. 2:6.) These forms, described under the name "essences," are part of the process of becoming, at the goal of that process they are substance. (*Wesen.*) Boehme introduces the novel idea, thus radically differing from the Gnostics, that the forms are not ranked as a series of emanations, but are interdependent, each one being the product of the other six, and no one preceding the other. Their relation to each other is such that "every spirit in the seven spirits of God is impregnated with all the seven spirits and they are all one in another as one spirit." (Aur. 10:64.) The seven spirits in harmonious combination form Eternal Nature, the complete manifestation of the will; in discord they form temporal nature. Eternal Nature is immanent in temporal as its heart and goal, that toward which the temporal longs to return since its fall.

It is at first confusing to find the seven "properties" described in both physical and psychical terms. But we must constantly remind ourselves that Boehme thinks of nature as animated from within by the same vital forces which find more complete expression in man. Man and nature are both creations of the seven properties. Viewed from without (*Vernunft*) the "properties" of nature appear physical, viewed from within (*Verstand*) these same vital forces appear as wills, separate elements of that one life which animates the universe. This universe is neither exclusively physical nor exclusively mental, it is vital. In the first three nature forms the physical predominates for these forms are

the periphery of the spirit. When, however, the one life rises to self-consciousness in the fourth form then the inner, in one sense the "mental," aspect of reality becomes manifest.

The *first force* or form is variously described as contraction, attraction, harshness, the magnet (M. M. 3:16), a congealing or coagulation, an impression, and the *prima materia.* (T. P. 1:9.) It causes weight and density. (M. 3:16; T. F. L. 4:14.) If allowed to act alone it would reduce all things to cold, hard, immobile matter, "as when water is frozen to ice." (Aur. 13:65.) It is the principle of individuality and concrete being, hence the origin of the soul (T. P. 15:62), and in fact the origin of every separate thing (Aur. 8:27) *qua separate.* The primordial will to be, whether in God or man, first contracts upon itself. "The desire proceeding from the will of the abyss is the first form and it is the creative fiat." [3] (M. M. 3:8.) This desire of the first will for substance is the first substance of the will and "it makes a great darkness in the abyss." (M. M. 3:9.) "For the nothing hungers after something and the hunger is the desire which . . . conceives only itself and draws itself into itself and brings itself from abyss to byss, so that the nothing is filled." (M. M. 3:5.) The darkness "arises from the first desire when the desire draws itself in and impregnates itself so that it is a stinging, bitter, harsh, hard, cold, grim *Feuergeist.* . . . Thus the abyss is hidden, yet manifest, as darkness is to our sight, but the source (*Quaal*) is unsearchable until the will sinks down into it, then it will be found and felt." (40Q. 1:49-51.) Thus the first form is the in-going will at its most primitive stage, it is blind desire physically manifested as contraction.

[3] Compare:
"Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning,
Desire the primal seed and germ of Spirit."
"The Creation Hymn," *Rig Veda,* X, 129.

This in-going force of attraction or desire could not exist without another force to oppose it. The *second quality* or property of eternal nature is *expansion.* (*Ausdehnung.*) As the first is centrepetal this is centrifugal. It is the separator or divider. It is the counter-will (*Widerwille*) which opposes the *"Formwille."* It makes pliable and movable what the first would make hard and dead. It is the *"Stachel der Regung,"* the "sting of stirring." (M. M. 3:10) and *"macht Unruhe."* (M. M. 3:11.) It is the water spirit which softens or dissolves. (Aur. 8:37.)

The two forms, the sharp and the bitter stinging are the original of all being, and the eternal will is the mother wherein they generate themselves: we understand that the attracting (*Herbigkeit,* perhaps acidity) always draws in with the grasping of the will and the drawing in is the sting of the movement which the attracting cannot endure. For the attracting desires a strong shutting up in death and the stinging bitterness is the opener.

Thus the second form is the out-going will at its most primitive stage, physically manifested as expansion. The more attraction pulls the more expansion pulls against it. (S. P. 1:38.) Each creates the other and so "it is a chain or band which always makes itself and has no maker." (T. F. L. 1:32.) These two opposing forms are so interdependent that it is difficult to tell one from the other. Sometimes (S. R. 1:12) both are called "attraction." This is not surprising when we consider that a force exists only in so far as there is another force to oppose it. Each force is a measure of the other. Boehme seems vaguely to realize that action and reaction are equal and opposite; either force alone would be nothing at all.

The great infinite space desires narrowness and limitation, wherein it may reveal itself . . . Therefore there must be a contrary will for a clear still will is as a nothing and generates nothing. If a will

would generate, it must be in something wherein it may form and produce. (T. F. L. 12:35.)

Scientific monists who reduce all things to a single force or one kind of energy might well notice this. As Schelling pointed out, a polarity of some sort seems fundamental in natural phenomena. There is no difference between a world of one thing and nothing at all.

The first two forces, though equal and opposite, do not oppose in such a way as to cancel each other. They form what is called in mechanics a couple and the result is rotation, which is the *third property* of eternal nature.

> Now these entering into one another as swiftly as a thought, the sting (second form) would go out of the sharpness (first form) but cannot, for the sharpness generates and holds it, and so, as it cannot overcome it, it turns like a wheel and breaks the attracted sharpness and creates a continual stirring and mixing. (T. F. L. 1:33.)

The resulting motion is the "wheel of nature" most often called "anguish" (*Angst*). As the first form is the "*grosser Tod*" this is the "*kleiner Tod.*" It is a motion toward no particular end, it is blind struggle in the darkness. Sometimes Boehme calls it heat or fire without light, more often the "bitter quality." In the third form the first two forms tear at each other ceaselessly, but can make no progress for neither gives way to the other. Nature here appears sometimes as a welter of chaotic forces, sometimes as blind demonic mechanism. It is hell, the wrath of God, the lowest and blackest level of material existence.

It is important to notice that Boehme often calls the third form "sensuality" (*Sinnlichkeit*). By this he appears to mean the world of nature as revealed to our senses, unilluminated by reason or understanding, the confused meaningless swarming mass of mere existence. By opposition to each

other the first two forms have produced a series of contrasts and tensions, "stings" as Boehme calls them, which impinge on our senses and appear to us as the world of nature. The third form is the "source of hellish fire [4] and of the sensual mind" (Tab. Prin. 39.) It is "the irritability (*Empfindlichkeit*) as a cause of the mind wherein the senses are active." (M. M. 6:16.) "It is the origin [4] of distinction or differentiation whereby the forces are, each in itself, mutually manifest, it is also the origin of the senses." (M. M. 13:12.) Only in the fourth form does understanding arise. The third form is a frightful anguish, but no true feeling is to be understood until the fire arises (the fourth form) (M. M. 3:16), for "the fourth form in nature is the kindling of the fire where first the feeling and understanding life arise." (M. M. 3:18.) In the *Six Points* (1:49) we find the third form defined as a

> moving, driving, fleeing and holding, as also feeling, tasting and hearing. Yet it is not a right life, but only a nature life, without a principle. For it has no growth, but is like a frenzy or madness where something goes whirling in itself as a wheel where indeed there is a bond of life, *but without understanding or knowledge, for it knows not itself.*

In the first three forms we have life which is sensuous, but not self-conscious (T. F. L. 2:15). The dim light of consciousness is just beginning as the third form goes over into the fourth, but nowhere in Boehme do we find a consistent sharp dividing line between these two forms. The cause of the pain of this nature life in the third form is plurality. (S. P. 1:47.) Plurality makes sensation possible, but nature hungers for a single unified life in which plurality is overcome. As yet nature is only motion, a rest-

[4] By "source" or "origin" Boehme means that this form is most prominent. All the others are, of course, present though not manifested.

less search for satisfaction which cannot be found in itself.

The first three forms constitute the first stage toward the manifestation of the Trinity. Freher calls them "God's first footsteps in nature." [5] Boehme has many names for this lower ternary,[6] "the eternal worm of the darkness," the "fire-pregnant triangle," the *"centrum naturæ."* It forms the corporeal being of all things (Aur. 8:52), the body in which the holy life is generated. (Aur. 24:65.) Allen defines the lower three as "homogeneity, heterogeneity and strain." [7] Spencer's "concentration, differentiation and determination" are suggestive parallels, though we have not yet reached fully determinate being. The first two forms are like the "love and hate" of Empedocles, and the third is the "war" which Heraclitus said was the "father of all things." It is too much to say [8] that in these three forms Boehme prophesied the modern theory of electricity although there are some startling resemblances. In his lower ternary he seems to go as far as Kant, who endeavored in his *Metaphysische Anfangsgrunde der Naturwissenschaft* to show that matter can be resolved, not into a number of indivisible material units, but into two ultimate forces, attraction and repulsion, by which all phenomena of nature can be explained. Modern physics is not far from this standpoint in its reduction of matter to energy. Schopenhauer follows Boehme closely in saying that "crude matter has its existence only in the strife of conflicting forces: . . . the conflict between attractive and repulsive forces, the former as gravitation pressing from all sides

[5] *Law Biography,* Walton, p. 290.
[6] "Ternary" is a term first used by Baader.
[7] Hastings Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics: Jacob Boehme.
[8] *Athenæum,* January 26, 1867. Also Vetterling, *The Illuminate of Görlitz,* p. 253.

toward the centre, the latter as impenetrability always opposing the former, either as rigidity, or elasticity; this constant pressure and resistance may be regarded as the objectivity of the will at its very lowest grade, . . . a blind striving, an obscure inarticulate impulse." [9]

Nature [10] cannot in itself find any relief from the pain of its conflicting wills. The more it wills to escape the darkness the greater the darkness becomes. (40Q. 1:40.) Its desire is the very matter out of which nature is made. The more it struggles for freedom from conflict, the more material and the less free it becomes. Stated mechanically the increase of a force is proportional to the increase of the opposing force. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Stated ethically the more I assert myself to get what I want the less I am able to go out from myself to get it. Self-assertion creates that very isolation which hinders the progress it attempts. In this hopeless struggle the wheel of nature whirls faster and faster and the forces rage and tear at each other more and more terribly.

We have now reached the crisis of the cosmic drama. Nature is saved by an extraordinary and wholly inexplicable event. At the culmination of the struggle there is a sudden release of a mighty pent-up force accompanied by a terrifying sound (*Schrack*) [11] and a great flash of light (*Blitz*).

[9] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Idea,* I, 195. (Eng. trans.)

[10] Boehme uses the term "nature" in at least three senses, (1) The eternal nature, (2) the temporal nature, (3) the first three forms which are the nature will as opposed to the spirit will.

[11] In the English translations Boehme's *Schrack* (modern German *Schreck*) is translated "flagrat." It is cognate with the English shriek or screech which would be a better translation. Ellistone in a note to the S. R. justifying flagrat as a translation says, "You may perceive a resemblance of this flagrat in thunder and lightning as also in gun powder and the like. It is the pregnant echo of the sound of eternity everywhere speaking and working and opening itself in love and anger." Earle translates *Schrack* as "terror." (S. P. Eng. ed., p. 26.)

Fire breaks forth in the midst of the whirling wheel and melts down and consumes the harshness of nature. The three primary forms sink down in death to be reborn into the light of the higher ternary. Boehme struggles hard through many different images to describe this rebirth from nature to spirit. His first and most frequent figure is that of fire generated by friction.[12] Such fire is not merely a figure. It is an actual example of the eternal process. (Aur. 9:23-33.) The first two qualities struggling against each other first generate dark heat which is the third form. As the anguish increases there is a faint glow (40Q. 1:45-46), then fire and light arise, "and this is the beginning of life." (A. 9:29.)

Boehme's fourth nature form is the transition point from the lower dark ternary to the higher bright ternary. As a point it has no dimensions. Three stages, however, can be detected; a sinking down to the point, the point, and the rising up beyond the point. The first belongs to the lower ternary, the third to the higher ternary and the point is the abyss, the eternal freedom, the absolute will of unmanifested Deity. This bottomless abysmal will here appears in the middle of the evolutionary process as the point or unity through which nature and man must pass in order to be reborn into light. In the next chapter we shall see that there is a sense in which this undifferentiated primordial will origi-

[12] A figure used by many others. "The assemblage and comparison of unknowns generates knowns as friction of cold and dark objects may produce heat and light." Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* p. 197. "It is in the interplay and frequent collisions of Gnosis and Praxis that sparks are struck out which illuminate the dark places of reality." Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism,* p. 153.

For Boehme, however, fire is more than a symbol. It is an actual manifestation on the material level of the Trinity itself. The "fierceness" of the fire is the Father, the Light of the fire is the Son and the air, apparently rising from it, is the Holy Ghost.

nates the evolutionary process by differentiating itself at the fourth form into nature and spirit.

Boehme calls the fourth form "the Cross" when he is thinking of the sinking down of the will to the point. Nature must be crucified that it may be reborn.

> When the lightning strikes the wheel it becomes a cross and can whirl no more, but stands trembling in the great power of the will of the eternal freedom which is God the Father. (T. F. L. 2:27.)

There is no way from the dark to the light triangle except through death on the cross of self-abnegation. Lucifer tried to fly above the cross and dropped back into darkness. In the fourth form the contradiction in the first triangle exhausts itself. "The fire consumes all grossness of the first forms and casts them into death." (S. R. 14:58.) *"Im Feuer ist Tod."* (Gnad. 2:32.) Here nature retraces its steps and sinks back to the eternal will which first gave it birth. This will, being bottomless, is freedom. The process was started by freedom longing for manifestation. A point has been reached at which the imperfect manifestation longs in its anguish for the freedom whence it came.

> Thus the first will which is called Father and is itself freedom desires nature and nature with great longing desires freedom that it may be released from the torment of anguish. And it receives freedom in its sharp fierceness in the imagination at which it is terrified as a flash for it is released from the torment of anguish. And in the terror (*Schrack*) arise two beings a deathly and a living to be understood thus; the will which is called Father which has freedom in itself, so generates itself in nature, that it takes on nature and is the universal power of nature. The *Schrack* of its nature is a kindler of fire, for when the dark anguish, as a stern, strong substance, takes the freedom into itself, it is transformed in the *Schrack,* in the freedom, into a flash (*Blitz*), and the flash is freedom as gentleness. Then the sting of death is broken and there rises in nature the other will of the Father, which he drew prior to nature

in the mirror of wisdom, namely, his heart of love, the desire of love, the kingdom of joy. (S. P. 1:54-57.)

This is probably as clear as any of the many dark accounts of the rebirth into light through complete self-denial, an event which is of central importance in Boehme's philosophy and which he never wearies of describing. The birth of light in man, nature or God, occurs under the operation of the same law. The higher life is reached only through death. "The sinking down goes into the still eternity, into the freedom, and the point of separation from the fire-life is death, but the sinking life pierces through death and sprouts forth into another world and has another substance wherein the light shines." (40Q. 1:94.)

Thus in the *"Feuerschrack"* or fourth form the original unmanifested unity and the discordant plurality of nature both find what they seek, that is, each other. The result is unity in plurality, in other words a perfectly adjusted organic life. Life arises out of oppositions which are not destroyed but harmonized.

The out-flown will longs after the mild unity and the unity longs after sensibility. So one goes in the other and when that happens there is a Schrack or Blitz as when one strikes steel on a stone. (Clavis 49.)

Thus before the flash we have nature and unity external to each other and afterward nature and unity internal to each other. The fourth form is the entrance of Deity into nature, the incarnation of the Son of God. Spirit acquires body and body acquires spirit. In the fourth form Boehme is the mystic in union with the absolute, the primal undifferentiated energy. Nature sinks back into God, but God comes forward into nature for each is incomplete without the other.

> The first will which is called Father finds itself in manifestation and the second will which is called Son finds itself in power. If there were no pain there were no joy. This is the kingdom of joy that life originates in pain and is freed from pain. (S. P. 4:69.)

The lower ternary supplies force, matter, individuality, and particularity and the passage through the fourth form is the baptism of all these in the original unity in order that harmony may result through rebirth in the spirit. By this sinking back to the first unity, out of which all arose, the parts become aware of each other and of their interdependence and the result is an interrelated self-conscious life.

The divided will which has passed through the cross of self-denial in the fourth form is harmonized by new content. The first forms of nature are necessarily present, but they remain in the background. In the lower level unity was unmanifested and plurality manifested. In the higher level the will is centered on unity. Hence unity is manifested [13] and plurality hidden. The abysmal will or eternal freedom behind phenomena to which nature retreats in order to find unity and harmony, is a *Durchgangspunkt.* To remain in it would be the "still standing death" with which the whole process began. But it must be passed through if nature is to be "tinctured" with divinity in order to attain "temperature" which is Boehme's usual word for harmony. God and nature meet in the "terrifying flash" of knowledge arising out of the opposition of the forms. God finds in nature, that is in the first three forms, a content for his formless empty will, and the blind struggling forces of nature find in Him that which relates them to each other through a common origin.

The soul is composed of the first four forms of nature. In the fourth form, "where light and darkness divide"

[13] "Kindled" is sometimes Boehme's suggestive word for manifestation.

(T. F. L. 5:19), the soul stands in the eternal freedom, the abyss out of which all arises and is, accordingly, as free as the will of that abyss. The soul may then imagine itself either into the dark or light ternary. If the soul imagines toward the lower or material, the fourth form appears to it as fire, the "anger of God" which consumes its materiality in the furnace of life. If the soul imagines toward the higher or spiritual ternary the fourth form appears as light, the love of God which unites the soul's will to God's will in *Verstand* the higher knowledge. At the fourth form the unethical nature-will becomes polarized and splits up into ethical moments, because self-knowledge arises.

> For the origin of imagination is the first form of nature . . . whence it goes through all forms and is carried as far as fire. There is the dividing bound or mark of spirit, there it is born. It is now free. It may go back again by its imagination into its mother the dark world, or going forward, sink down through the anguish of fire into death and bud forth in the light. That depends on its choice. Where it yields itself up there it must lie for the fire (defined here as life) must have substance, in order to have something to feed upon. (S. P. 7:3.)

In the flash God and nature both attain self-knowledge, each through the other. Boehme sometimes speaks of the unmanifested abysmal will as a light, but since it has nothing to shine on it is also darkness. Nature furnishes the necessary background. The first will as pure subjectivity goes forward and finds itself objectified in nature, and nature going backward becomes aware of its origin and goal. Light only becomes light through a background of darkness. Manifestation is only possible through opposition and reconciliation. This law Boehme finds fundamental. Nature began through the opposition of the first two forms, contraction and expansion. Then the opposition of the subjective will

"as thin as nothing" and physical nature in its first three forms produces the flash of knowledge. Here the oppositions of mechanical nature based on necessity pass over to similar oppositions based on freedom, and so the light of self-consciousness arises. Self-consciousness is generated by blind opposing impulses face to face with primordial freedom.

The flash of the higher knowledge changes the first three forms into the last three, for the higher ternary, composed of the fifth, sixth and seventh forms, is in a certain sense the lower ternary seen as it were from the inside. Here the doctrine of the seven forms is linked with *Vernunft* and *Verstand*. Boehme recognizes *Vernunft* or the lower knowledge, in the dim light of the fire as the third form passes over into the fourth. The higher ternary is the lower harmonized by *Verstand* which is the flash of light in the fourth form. This flash is perpetual with God, but in human beings it appears intermittently. Boehme associates darkness with knowledge derived from the senses, fire with rational knowledge, and light with the true or mystical knowledge. He sees that in nature dark heat precedes fire and fire precedes light. When light appears darkness and fire are not abolished. They are its necessary bases, just as the gleam of a candle exhibits a dark material centre, a fiery flame and an out-going light. In *Vernunft,* symbolized by fire, beings in the first three forms of nature cannot understand the world because they are separate and discordant and see each other only externally as individual self-wills. As the fire grows more intense it dissolves this isolation which is dependent on materiality and the three forces sink to the abyss in the fourth form to rise to a higher life. In this higher life, *Verstand* sees unity uppermost because it has united with

that one will out of which all things come. All objective forms of the will are denied in order that consciousness may deduce a bond of unity out of itself by retreat into the subjective and thus see nature with the universal eyes of God, not with the particular eyes of men.

In this change from a human to a divine point of view physical nature is not abolished. In *Vernunft* matter is manifest and spirit is hidden, in *Verstand* spirit is manifest and matter hidden. Which shall be manifest and which hidden depends on the soul's attention or imagination. Viewed from the outside the world is a swirl of contending forces; viewed from the inside it is an outer expression of the inner life of God. In the lower or external knowledge plurality is in the foreground and unity is hidden. In the higher knowledge the first three forms in becoming the material substratum of existence retire into the background and the principle of unity, the light of the eternal freedom shines upon them and in so doing manifests itself. As the evolutionary process proceeds through the fourth form it leaves the first three forms behind, but it finds them again on a higher level, internalized by *Verstand.*

Speaking in ethical terms, *Vernunft* is associated with the lower ternary because it is egoistic. It is the nature of reason to satisfy itself. It is not associated with the higher ternary because the gateway to the higher, which is resignation, is inexplicable. The resigned will seems to lead the soul to utter extinction in the irrational depths of the abyss. But soul does not perish there; it is saved by faith. It triumphs over crucifixion on the cross of resignation, and is raised up to new and higher knowledge.

It is perhaps misleading to describe the birth of light in terms of knowledge for we tend to think of knowledge as

passive acceptance of an objective world. Apparently, according to the above description, the higher ternary is simply the lower seen with eternal rather than with temporal eyes. No real change seems to have taken place. It is important to remember in this connection that Boehme's philosophy is voluntaristic. Knowledge is creative and to know the higher life is to bring it to manifestation and even to become it. In mystic union with the absolute the will receives a vision of its goal, which is the higher ternary, but it does not remain passively beholding it. By the law of the circular process it must return to our disordered earth and embody the vision. Nature and men are bound together. When Adam fell, all nature fell with him.[14] As a result, "turba" or confusion replaced "temperature" or harmony. Adam's descendants must redeem nature by fixing their imaginations on the Son who is the goal and Savior of nature. Through such attention to the eternal we become like it and thus are enabled to bring salvation to the temporal.

This theory does not apply to man alone. Boehme sees throughout nature a continual transformation from the disordered strife of matter to the light of a higher life. When an object in nature, whether it be a human body or something else, evolves to a higher stage, in one sense it remains the same object. The nature forces which compose it are the same forces as before, but now they are in "temperature." This temperature is a new non-material being which is the higher life of the object. So far as "outer reason" is concerned no fundamental change has taken place. As a scientist might say to-day, man may evolve but he is still nothing but a swarm of atoms and life is only a more com-

[14] "Earth felt the wound and nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe."
Paradise Lost, IX, 782.

plicated mechanism than inert matter. But to the higher knowledge which views living nature from the inside with love and sympathetic understanding, life is more than a mere rearrangement of material particles.[15] This sympathetic view from within not only finds, but also creates, a new object. The three lower forms evolve into the three higher through creative imagination.

An analogy may assist us to understand this seeming paradox which is at the root of Boehme's voluntaristic mysticism. Our illustration is not one which was used by Boehme, but it is not at variance with his parables of tree and flower which emphasize the interdependence of parts and the unity of a living whole.

Suppose in a group of men each is following his own egoistic impulses regardless of his fellows. The result is confusion, that is, the lower ternary. When such strife has reached a certain intensity conviction dawns that each may better attain his ends by submerging his egoism in a common enterprise. The individual accordingly denies his selfishness and imagines himself into the common undertaking, turning his back on particularity and self-interest. He is now, as it were, in mystical union with a life higher than his own. This is the *Durchgangspunkt* to the light world which a given individual or possibly all the individuals concerned now enter, not by reason, but by will. Each assumes that his fellows in the enterprise have the same faith in it which he has. This he cannot know. The others make the same assumption. This general expectation creates its object. Out of the united faith of all that each will play his part, a

[15] Boehme, apparently, gives us the same rules for the evolution of higher forms of life out of lower as for the evolution of life out of "dead" matter. He does not sharply distinguish between the two because to him all matter is, in some degree, living.

new life is born in the group. This new life is controlled by new laws of action. It is the corporate will which harmonizes the individual wills into a common purpose. Knowledge could not have discovered it in advance because it was created by the very faith which posited it. This new being cannot be found by any scientific instrument nor isolated in a laboratory. It is not material. The individual parts are still the original physical entities that made up the group. Yet something new is there which governs the parts for its own purpose. A new kind of supersensual attraction has appeared to hold the parts together. It is love, a force which rules not from the outside as is the case with the first nature form, but from within as in the fifth nature form. Our group of individuals has risen to the higher ternary because its conflicting interests have been harmonized in a higher unified life.

Such is the evolution of social life. The evolution of physical life is possibly similar. We might suppose a group of molecules going through much the same process as our group of men. Their harmonized action is evinced by a new organic life which controls them from within.

This is not a fantastic picture. A molecule of water in an inanimate body is chemically the same molecule as it is in an organic body. But is it "spiritually" the same? Does it not, as part of an organic whole, in some unexplained way submerge the egoistic impulse by which it is controlled according to the laws of its own nature alone and submit to the larger plan of the organism? What is life but a type of existence created by the harmonization of many parts that are not living if they are isolated from each other? Isolation and strife result in dead matter, the lower ternary; coöperation and harmony, brought about by resigning the

own will to the whole, is life, the higher ternary. We cannot conjecture what degree of dim consciousness may accompany the formation of a society of molecules such as we have suggested, but life and mind, as we know them in ourselves, have evolved out of matter, and matter therefore must contain the germ of life and mind. The fear of describing nature in terms which suggest primitive animism is disappearing to-day from many philosophies of science. Even the atom is now described in organic terms.[16] It may be going too far to say that the electric field which holds the electrons of an atom to their orbits is the outer aspect of an inward faith in each other which creates their society, but it is nevertheless true that the evolution of human society begins with the atom and the atom accordingly must contain human society in germ.

After the evolutionary process has passed through eternal freedom which is the absolute point of view, attraction, the first nature form becomes love, the *fifth form;* expansion, the second form, becomes speech or any sort of intelligible expression, the *sixth form.* Rotation or motion which is the third form becomes God's complete manifestation, the Kingdom of Heaven, the *seventh form* of eternal nature. Thus attraction plus freedom gives love, which creates unity in difference, not unity through external force which is no true unity. Love is physical attraction baptized by divine knowledge. Here we pass from an Old Testament morality of law in the first ternary to a New Testament morality of love in the second.

The birth of love, the fifth nature form, which holds the spiritual universe together as attraction holds together the

[16] For such points of view see Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*; Smuts, *Holism and Evolution.*

material universe, is sometimes symbolized by a plant growing out of the dark ground. This figure suggests the Buddhist parable of the lotus. Nature gives birth to that which is different from itself.

> The flash makes the dark stern might thin again and a plant springs up out of the countless essences, and this is the power of the second centre, for in this upspringing there is a love desire and the eternal light reaches the freedom without nature. The freedom without nature kindles (manifests) in this love. . . . Here the sharpness which is the first form is not perceptible, for *although it is there* it is now a birth of joy, and a true fulfilling of the first will which is God's, which he first set in desire and brought forth in nature, and out of nature grows a plant which is love . . . Thus light breaks open the gates of darkness and the love-plant grows in the dark nature and lives in the eternal stillness of the father and is called his Son. (T. F. L. 2:83-86.)

The birth of the fifth form, love or light, is summarized in a passage in Boehme's last book, the *Clavis*.

> In the flash the unity perceives the sensibility . . . and the fire becomes a burning love. The darkness is pierced through with light so that it is no more discerned, but remains eternally in itself in the impression. . . . This fire ground only becomes hunger and sharp desire when the will breaks itself off from unity . . . The fire is an object of the great unity of the love of God, and therefore the eternal desire becomes perceptible and the perception of the unity is called love. It is a burning or life in the unity of God. And according to this burning of love God calls himself a loving God, for *unity pierces through the painful will of the fire and changes it into joy.* In the fiery will of the eternal nature stands the soul of man and if the soul breaks itself off from the light and love of God and enters into its own natural desire then the source of this darkness becomes manifest in it, and this is the hellish fire and the anger of God. (Cl. 50:55 *inter alia.*)

Boehme calls the sixth form, that is the unity of expansion and freedom, sound, speech, tone, the outspoken word of

God, expression, differentiation (Aur. 10:1), and understanding. (Cl. 69.) As he associates love with the visual sense, so he associates the sixth form with the auditory sense, and in describing it he seems at times wholly lost in his figure. The harmony of the forces attained in the light is imaged as a musical symphony, generating a sound unheard by the coarser ear of nature. (M. M. 5:19.)

This harmony of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling is the true intelligent [17] life for when one power enters into another, then they reach each other in the sound, and when they penetrate each other they mutually awaken and know each other. In this knowledge is the true understanding, which has neither number, measure, nor cause, but is of the nature of the eternal wisdom, the one which is also all. (M. M. 5:14.)

The sixth form "is the chariot on which the spirit rides and executes that which is decreed by the council of the seven spirits." (A. 15:76.) "The sound is the declarer that the beloved child is born." (T. P. 3:13.) "Sound" thus symbolizes the out-going will just as love signifies the in-going will. "Sound" is the expression of love. Boehme sometimes calls it *Verstand* because, although the fifth form is the beginning of true knowledge, expression completes it. As the second form tears asunder the hardness of the first, so expression, or differentiation, the sixth form (*Unterscheiden* Th. Q. 3:31), breaks up the cohesive force of love. Boehme does not mean that the fifth form is an emotion nor that the sixth is a physical sound (although these two forms are manifest in love and sound respectively). He merely emphasizes again the double character of the higher knowledge which involves both the in-going and out-going

[17] Boehme uses the adjective *verständliche*. Its connection with *Verstand* is obvious.

will. In speech the unity of one thought becomes a plurality of expression. In love plurality of souls is drawn into unity of life.

The seventh form is the consummation of the whole process. In it the will becomes fully manifest to itself. Boehme calls it the pure element, substance, body, the glory of God, eternal nature, the formed Word, paradise, heaven, the Kingdom of Heaven. In describing it he becomes ecstatic and can hardly contain himself.

> Beloved mind, behold, this is now God and his kingdom of heaven, even the eternal element and paradise, as it stands in an eternal beginning from eternity to eternity. What joy, pleasure and loveliness is therein I have no pen to describe, for the earthly tongue is much too weak, speech is dross as compared to its gold. (T. P. 14:90.)

Here the one abysmal will which began the process as negative unity, a unity reached by subtraction, has become positive unity containing an infinite wealth of detail such as might be compared to "a stringed instrument tuned into a harmony although with many kinds of strings." (S. R. 15:50.) Nature becomes wholly alive. It is at the same time one and many. Here the forms "do mutually in a love-play wrestle with each other like a pleasant song or pregnant harmony or kingdom of joy." (M. M. 6:2.)

This is the Body of God as the first six forms are His life. (Aur. 16:9.) It is a substance without which the six forms would be as spirits without a body, and no spirit can exist without a body. (T. F. L. 5:5.) It is the "substance of spirit which the spirit of God wears as a garment and with which he reveals Himself, otherwise His form would not be known." (T. F. L. 5:50.)

> The seventh spirit in the Divine Power is the body which is generated by the other six, wherein all heavenly figures subsist, wherein

all things image and form themselves and out of which all beauty and joy arises. This is the true spirit of nature, yes nature itself, wherein comprehensibility consists, and wherein all creatures are formed in heaven and earth, yes heaven itself is formed therein and all that is natural in the whole Deity stands in this spirit. If this spirit were not, there would be no angels nor men and God would be unsearchable. (A. 11:1-3.)

The seventh form is the final adjustment and harmonization of all seven. Boehme calls it *Eternal Nature.* It is an already existing perfection, operating as one of the seven forces which make up the world as we now see it which is called *temporal nature.* This *temporal nature* is a devolution from eternal nature and is created when the lower ternary is imperfectly subordinated to the upper. The seven qualities are all present in temporal nature but in a different relationship. The first contracts too harshly, the second tears apart too much, the third whirls too rapidly. Thus in our bodies sensation is excellent and necessary, but if a finger is crushed, sensation is stirred too much. (Aur. 5:71-72.) So with the forms, if any form asserts itself too much the harmony is destroyed and temporal nature comes into existence. Temporal nature is spoiled nature; half-dead nature,[18] whereas eternal nature, latent within it, is the perfection of life. That Boehme visualizes the perfection of eternal nature as an organic perfection is evident from his figures.

As the members of man's body love one another, so do the spirits in the Divine Power, there is nothing but a longing, desiring and fulfilling as well as a triumphing and delight in each other, whence come understanding and distinction in God, angels, men, beasts,

[18] "We may therefore say that every organism expresses the idea of which it is the image only after we have subtracted the part of its force which is expended in subduing the lower ideas that strive with it for matter. This seems to have been running in the mind of Jacob Boehme when he says somewhere that all the bodies of men and animals and even plants are half dead." (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Idea,* I, 191.) (Eng. trans.)

fowls and all that lives, whence these spirits become living and the power of life penetrates through all. (Aur. 9:64-67.) (Also Aur. 10:40.)

The distinction made in a previous chapter between time and eternity appears again here as the distinction between a temporal process that is not entirely interrelated and an eternal one that is completely harmonized. The properties, says Boehme, are "in eternity spiritual" (Gnad. 3:40) and "in the outer created world they are in strife with each other in evil and good." The doctrine of the seven forms describes the evolution of God to complete self-conscious personality. The Father is the dark subjective nature will which began the process. The Son, the goal of the process, is God the Person.[19] "God," says Boehme, "is no Person except in Christ." (M. M. 7:5.) God has won his personality through a long and fearful struggle through the lower forms of nature up into the light of complete self-knowledge. Eternal Nature is Deity incarnate. The Cross of Calvary symbolizes the agony which God eternally suffers in overcoming his self-assumed physical limitations and rising to the heaven of a completely satisfied will.

To man, Deity may appear either as an angry nature God embodied in the lower forces or as God the Person, a God of love embodied in the higher forces. To a will centered on the lower ternary God creates both evil and good, but to a will centered on the higher range God creates only good. Evil is not illusory. God must pass through a real imperfection in order to attain a real perfection. God as a source of evil is the devil's point of view. God as a source of

[19] "God has no beginning and there is nothing sooner than he, but His word has bottomless beginning and a bottomless end and yet is not called end rightly but Person, the heart of the Father." (T. F. L. 3:2.)

Blake says, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire" (written on painting in Tate Gallery).

good is an angelic point of view. To man in temporal nature, a stage in which light and darkness alternate and thus create the twilight of temporal knowledge, God sometimes partakes of one aspect and sometimes of the other, depending on the direction of the creative imagination. This is Boehme's answer to the problem proposed at the beginning of chapter I, the reconciliation of God as revealed in nature with a God who satisfies the demands of the human spirit.

Boehme describes Eternal Nature as glorified material nature. It is all that temporal nature will be when it overcomes its inner conflict. "The man of genius," says Schopenhauer, "requires imagination in order to see in things not that which nature has actually made, but that which she endeavored to make yet could not because of the conflict of her forms." [20] Such a genius was Jacob Boehme. He relies on the famous theorem of alchemy, "What is above is like that which is below and what is below is like that which is above." When he says, "The corrupted nature of this world labors in its utmost power to bring forth heavenly forms" (Aur. 12:89), he does not mean that heavenly forms are bloodless concepts conceived intellectually, but corporeal beings to be perceived sensually. However, he often compares the process towards eternal nature to a thought process. "The birth of Eternal Nature is like the thoughts of man as, for example, when a thought is generated by something and afterwards spreads out infinitely." (T. P. 3:9.) "The angels are the thoughts of God according to love and anger as a manifestation of his mind or will." (T. Q. 6:5.)

[20] *World as Will and as Idea,* I, 241. (Eng. trans.)
Similarly,—"If the doors of perception were cleansed, even this world would appear to men as it is, infinite." William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

Boehme is here thinking of a thought process deeply colored with the sensual as was his own. His heaven is not less sensual than this earth. It is more so. The colors are richer, the sounds more musical. Temporal nature is "spoiled sensuality." Eternal nature is "living matter at harmony with itself." Temporal nature, like Pygmalion's statue, may be quickened into life by the breath of love.

The character of Boehme's Eternal Nature can be better understood if we compare it briefly with the two most famous extra-phenomenal realms in philosophy, Plato's realm of ideas and Kant's thing-in-itself. Boehme's system of thought stood at the transition point when ancient Greek objectivism, typified in the philosophy of the Church and the philosophy of alchemy, was passing over into the new subjectivism represented in the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. Eternal Nature was born of the two. It resembles Plato's realm of ideas in that it is an objective eternal goal of perfection toward which temporal nature is drawn. It resembles Kant's thing-in-itself because it is posited not by reason but by subjective will. It is neither subjective nor objective, but subjective-objective. Plato stresses goals, Kant origins, Boehme life which includes both goals and origins. In this he is truly the philosopher of transition. Eternal Nature is the evil Protestant will perfected in the alchemistic retort of the seven forms, into the absolute good of the Platonic heaven. In Protestantism evil is real and the doctrine of predestination places the responsibility close to the Divine throne itself. In Platonism evil is an illusion. In Boehme's Eternal Nature real evil is present as a hidden substratum of goodness. An Idea of Plato as a realization of will is a different thing from an Idea of Plato as the negation of matter. Boehme's heaven may look like Plato's,[21] but there is in it

a dark nature center, a lurking devil whom Plato would not have admitted. Dying objective Platonism and nascent subjective Protestantism were fused in Boehme's conception of Eternal Nature in such a way that the Platonic realm of Ideas was supplemented by the depth of pain and tragedy which was needed to make it a true picture of life itself.

We are now in a position to summarize the significance of the Three Principles so often mentioned in Boehme's works. The first or dark principle is the lower ternary composed of the first three nature forms; the second or light principle is the higher ternary composed of the last three nature forms and the third principle is temporal nature in which light and darkness contend, though neither gains the mastery. The light and dark principles are so related that each makes the manifestation of the other possible. Evolution begins in tension between attraction and expansion which are the first two nature forces. Each of them creates the other. The process ends with similar tension between darkness and light, physical nature and divine life. In Eternal Nature light is manifest and darkness hidden, but the tension still exists as the basis of manifestation. "Without poison," says Boehme, "there can be no life."

> The power in the light is God's love-fire and the power in the darkness is God's anger fire; yet it is but one and one only fire, but divided into two principles, that the one might be manifest in the other. For the flame of anger is the manifestation of the great love; and in the darkness is the light made known else it were not manifest of itself. (M. M. 8:27.)
>
> The wrathfulness and painful source is a root of the kingdom of

[21] Boehme often calls eternal nature the "universal." (S. R. 11:91.) This term, however, is used in an alchemistic sense. It refers to the philosophers' stone. The evolution of eternal nature out of the temporal is the "process of the universal." (S. R. 10:15-21.)

joy and the kingdom of joy is a root of the enmity and dark wrathfulness, thus there is a contrarium whereby the good is made manifest and known that it is good. (M. M. 4:19.)

The desire to good and the desire to evil, both must be or God would not be manifested. Nothing in nature is to be rejected or all would be a still nothing. (T. F. L. 3:1.)

Thus without shadow no light however brilliant could be seen.

In his doctrine of the three principles Boehme does not trichotomize the cosmos into self-sufficient parts. The moment he turns his attention on any one of the parts he discovers all three of them in the one. The three principles cannot exist separately because they cannot be known separately. "Each without the other would be an Ungrund." They exist in all things and in each other. This is the cause of much obscurity in Boehme's works though his ultimate meaning is plain.

Thus we find many paradoxical expressions like this:

The centre of nature has three principles in the original . . . and these three are called in the third principle sulphur, mercury and salt. (S. R. 2:11.)

Thus we find that all three principles are in the third. But more trouble follows. As we read further we find that sulphur splits up into sul (soul) and phur (fire) and so on ad infinitum. But this everlasting splitting up of everything into two opposing phases whose interaction forms a third is to be expected from Boehme's epistemology. The three principles must exist in all that is known for knowledge is born of the trinity which comprises the two opposing phases of the will and their interaction. Accordingly we can know any one of the three principles only by recognizing all three principles in it.

Boehme's science with its strange theological and psycho-

logical terminology makes at first sight small appeal to the modern mind. "In the dawn of science," says Vaughan,[22] "hovered a meteor which at once lured on and led astray the seekers after truth, . . . it was the hope of a special illumination." Boehme followed this meteor, yet as Vaughan says, "it was characteristic of Boehme's theology to resolve acts of judgment or sovereign intervention as much as possible into the operation of law."[23] This is very true. In spite of his Faustian craving for a knowledge higher than that reached by the slow labor of science, he struggles hard for a genuinely objective attitude. Boehme does not in general come under the criticism of Munsterberg,[24] who confines mysticism "to the regions where ignorance of nature leaves blanks in the causal system and so has to tremble at every advance which science makes." For Boehme all is miracle. The word *Wunder,* miracle, is one of his words for manifestation. Boehme is of small use in physical science, not because he is not searching for inviolable law, but because his whole concern is religious and ethical. His is the problem of the Timæus, the moral perfecting of nature.

> To this end stands the poor soul in the prison house of the elements that it might be a laborer and re-unite the wonders of the external nature with the light world. (Ep. 5.)

We may with Schopenhauer[25] consider that Boehme means by "longing" what science means by relationship, but he probably meant more than that, for no concept of his was without a strongly emotional element. Boehme thought of nature as having the same dimensions as man. Here he differs from physical science as such. Physical science deal-

[22] *Hours with the Mystics,* I, p. 57.
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 116.
[24] *Grundzug der Psychologie,* I, p. 120.
[25] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and as Idea,* p. 398.

ing as it does only with measureable relations fixes its exclusive attention on Boehme's first three forms of nature. It is not concerned with good and evil. Boehme goes beyond it and finds seven forms, the last three constituting with the first three an antithesis which creates good and evil. In saying that all seven forms are in all things the shoemaker of Görlitz is not far from teaching that all consciousness is consciousness of value. To this many would to-day agree. Science may struggle hard to separate things and values, but it is doubtful whether man can view nature so dispassionately. "The law to do right," says Boehme, "is written in nature and thou hast that very book in thy heart." (Aur. 11:54.)

Boehme's penetrating insight is befogged with so much nonsense derived from the alchemists that a comparison between him and serious modern thinkers might seem out of place. Nevertheless it would not be difficult to find close parallels between his interpretation of the universe and that of more than one contemporary philosopher. In his mystic philosophy of life he is not far from Bergson and Eucken. If he were living to-day Boehme would find a congenial spirit in such a scientist as Arthur S. Eddington who has become acutely aware of the limitations of scientific method and who has consequently put his approval to a kind of mystical knowledge which approaches nearer to the heart of things than scientific concepts can penetrate.[26] Nor is it a serious exaggeration of Boehme's importance to assert that his doctrine of the seven forms is a precursor of the organic conception of nature which is to-day replacing mechanistic theories in such analyses as that of A. N. Whitehead. Again

[26] Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, Chap. XV.

we might, with some show of reason, consider him a prophet of the doctrine of emergent evolution. In Boehme's works the higher level is constantly described as emerging out of the lower in a manner which is very suggestive of recent theories.[27] To Boehme, however, the discontinuity between the lower and higher stage in the evolutionary process is not such a miracle as it appears to be to the modern emergent evolutionist. Boehme can explain it in great detail because he has himself been through it.

Our philosopher is particularly suggestive of modern thought in his explanation of the origin of the light of consciousness and self-knowledge.

> Consciousness [says Muirhead] arises through a conflict of different interests in an endeavor to bring them into the completest harmony with one another and thus the will into completest harmony with itself.

This is exactly what Boehme tried so hard to say. Boehme's theory is followed in the main by Schelling and Hartmann. In Hartmann's philosophy intellect, originally a servant of will, and obeying it without question, rebels and disturbs the harmony. Out of the friction thus occasioned consciousness emerges as a product which recognizes the antagonism of the generative elements. In Boehme's allegorical language this intellect is Lucifer, originally the son of God, who plays the part of rebel. The light, says Boehme, arises out of the very fire of hell. Tagore puts the same thought in poetic language when he says, "It is the function of our own intellect to realize the truth through untruths, and knowledge is nothing but the continually burning up of error to set free the

[27] The following statement, for instance, is Behmenistic: "Dissolution at a lower level of emergence is contributory to evolution at a higher level." Morgan, *Life, Mind and Spirit,* p. XIII.

light of truth. Our will, our character has to attain perfection by continually overcoming evils, either inside or outside us or both; our physical life is consuming bodily materials every moment to maintain the life fire; and our moral life has its fuel to burn." [28]

[28] Rabindranath Tagore, *Sādhanā,* p. 53.

God is within and without, he is even in the depths of hell
And Los said: I beheld the finger of God in terrors
. . . I saw the finger of God go forth
Giving a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off forever.

WM. BLAKE, *Jerusalem.*

CHAPTER VI

FROM GOD TO NATURE. THE PROBLEM OF EMANATION

One important problem remains regarding the generation of Eternal Nature through the seven forms. How did the process originate? Boehme is determined to leave no question unanswered. In the previous chapter the two wills began their careers as attraction and expansion by creating physical nature on its lowest level, and then, evolving by a living logic, they brought nature to its goal in a complete and harmonized life. But what is the nature of the neutral entity which preceded the divison into attraction and expansion. Or, stating the question in theological terms, why does the unmanifested God desire manifestation, He who is perfect and desires nothing? If Eternal Nature is the complete objectification of God's will what are the purely subjective elements in God which started the process? Boehme thinks that he can explore the bottomless will beyond nature. It is not easy to follow him as he roams the outer dark. Two wills, we have discovered, make experience possible, but of one will nothing can be known or said. This one will of the abyss came into the midst of the evolutionary process in the fourth form as a unifying principle, combining with the struggling forces of nature to generate both knowledge and the higher life. It has so far appeared as a

condition not as an object of knowledge. In exploring the absolute and searching for a "why" for the universe Boehme ceases to be a voluntaristic dualist and becomes a rationalistic monist. The absolute, no longer an object of purely irrational mystical experience is analyzed and discussed. Here we find the beginnings of idealism, the first important attempt in history to derive the universe out of the subject. The problem now is the problem of Kant and his successors. What is the inherent logical structure of the subjective will by which it creates this particular world rather than some other. This problem, which had hardly existed for Boehme in his earlier works, became increasingly important to him as his mind was less occupied with a philosophy of nature and more concerned with the problems of evil, of freedom, and of the extent to which God is identified with the world. In describing evolution through the seven forms he had little to say of what lies beyond nature except to designate it as an empty will or "eternal freedom" which contained a longing for content, a longing which was the beginning of nature as its first form. God as Father was darkness, manifested in the blind nature forces; God as Son was light or God the Person; God as Holy Ghost was the interaction of the two or harmonious self-conscious life. The trinity was thus eternal nature itself in its threefold operation and the one will or eternal freedom served as a starting point for thought, behind which it was useless to go. But in addition to this nature trinity with its latent evil Boehme had another trinity which he kept in the orthodox compartment of his mind wholly separated from the other. This was the Lutheran Trinity of Jehovah, Christ and the Holy Ghost. This Trinity, uncontaminated by any taint or

even the possibility of evil, had no place anywhere in his system, yet our philosopher, being a meek and pious churchgoer as well as the boldest of heretics, determined to find room for it somewhere. To do this he must find a trinity antecedent to the evolutionary process.

The order of Boehme's thought is always the order of his own experience. There is first an antagonism, a conflict of wills or forces. This conflict is nature itself on its lower level either in man or outside him. Then comes negation, the sinking down into the depths and the rising up into a new nature harmonized as a revelation of Deity. The practical and ethical character of Boehme's interests, which are the regeneration of man and nature out of pain and discord to peace and harmony, compel him to start with the world as he finds it and to struggle through from multiplicity to unity. Once he has solved that problem he may inquire, from the vantage point of this higher knowledge, how this present disharmony came about. Like Lucifer and Adam, who fell into matter and became mere materialists because of too much curiosity about the origin of things, Boehme himself inconsistently attempts to give, as a sequel, a rational explanation of evil and multiplicity. But the course of his thought first takes the other direction. The question, "How is God born in nature?" is equivalent in Boehme's mind to the question, "How may I go through nature to an experience of God?" His epistemology identifies philosophy and life. God is born in nature in the same way that God is born in man. The process proceeds from the incomplete to the complete.

If this is true it is surprising to discover that most interpreters of Boehme describe him as beginning with a nameless

One which for ulterior reasons divides into a trinity and then for further reasons creates the world. For example Martensen,[1] who was himself influenced by Hamberger[2] and Baader,[3] says:

> The fundamental task which Boehme has set himself is to apprehend God and in this light to apprehend the world (p. 36). Out of the self-perfect God he desires to grasp and explain the created world (p. 47). The first link in Boehme's theosophic train of thought is the unit which he designates the abyss where all as yet is in indifference (p. 56).

Such statements arise through too exclusive attention to certain expressions in Boehme's later works and a tendency to read into him Neo-Platonic theories of emanation and such conceptions of God as that of Eckhart. Thus we find in Boutroux's essay[4] a description of four steps which descend like a Gnostic ladder from heaven to earth; at the top is the One, then the Trinity, then eternal nature and finally this temporal world. Each time God "moves himself" to accomplish the next stage. That Boehme's thought, like his evolutionary process, first moves, not from a knowledge of God to a knowledge of nature, as the orthodox bishop Martensen would wish, but from a knowledge of nature to a knowledge of God will appear more clearly if we inquire, through a comparison of his different works, how his thought developed.

While the theory of manifestation through the seven forms remains fairly constant, the theory of that which is to be manifested undergoes considerable change. There are in

[1] H. L. Martensen, *Jacob Boehme.* Tr. by T. Rhys Evans. London, 1885.
[2] Julius Hamberger, *Die Lehre des deutschen Philosophen Jakob Boehme,* Munich, 1844.
[3] Baader, *Vorlesungen und Erläuterungen zu Boehme's Lehre.* Sämt. Werke, XIII.
[4] Boutroux, *Le philosophe allemand Jacob Boehme,* 1888.

Boehme's writings at least four theories of the subjective abysmal will.[5]

(1) In Boehme's earliest theory the trinity and the seven forms are loosely connected. The trinity is wholly good as all seven forms are in each person. To account for imperfection a fourth will, Lucifer, is introduced.

(2) In the second theory the eternal will is a trinity continually passing over from a state of longing and discord in the first person or the first three forms to a state of harmony and perfection through the second person in the last three forms. There is a mysterious will beyond which is a "nothing."

(3) According to the third theory the eternal will is a threefold will having an ideal existence outside the seven forms and coming to reality or manifestation through the forms. Prior to the forms the trinity is unmanifested goodness.

(4) Finally the eternal will is interpreted as a neutral one, neither evil nor good, which on the one hand differentiates itself into a trinity which is wholly good, but merely ideal, and on the other hand into seven forms which manifest it in nature.

The first theory appears only in the *Aurora,* the second in the *Three Principles,* the *Three-fold Life,* and the *Forty Questions,* the third in the *Incarnation* and the *Signatura Rerum* and the fourth in the *Gnadenwahl* and the *Mysterium Magnum.*[6] Needless to say there are many exceptions as Boehme's thought fluctuates considerably. In his later books he constantly returns to the earlier theories.

[5] This discussion has been much helped by Bastian's brief work, *Der Gottesbegriff bei J. Boehme,* 1905. Bastian outlines three theories of God.

[6] This list omits numerous smaller works which follow the same changes chronologically.

Such a confusion is to be expected for Boehme holds that the only distinct ideas we can have of God are those we have of eternal nature in its seven forms. (T. F. L. 4:87-89). "The Trinity is first rightly understood in his eternal manifestation where he manifests himself through eternal nature progressively from fire into light." (M. M. 7:12.) The attempt to know God without eternal nature is, he says, like trying to know the mind without thoughts. Eternal nature may be defined as the knowable aspect of God. Accordingly, Boehme is clearest and most consistent in the second theory to which he always adheres closely while dealing only with the forms. This theory was elaborated in the preceding chapter. The other theories arise through an effort to deal with the problem of evil and with pantheism. In the first theory Lucifer and in the third and fourth nature and the abyss seem like dei ex machina brought in to relieve God of the responsibility for evil.

We find in Boehme's epistles that he was well aware that his philosophy evolved gradually. At first, he says, he saw the truth "as in a great deep and as in chaos where all lies and the development (*Auswicklung*) of this was impossible for me. From time to time it opened in me like a plant." (Ep. 12:10.) The *Aurora* was written by "a young child still in his A. B. C.'s." (Ep. 12:13.) The first seven chapters of the *Aurora,* as he acknowledges *"handeln ganz schlecht"* (Int. to *Aurora*), but in the eighth chapter he discovers the seven forms and their history is the basis of the remainder of the book. There is no mention in the *Aurora* of eternal freedom, the temperature, the still liberty, the chaos, the *Mysterium Magnum,* the abysmal eye, the mirror of wonders, or "the eternal generation of the trinity" which

appear so often in the later books. Boehme's eyes are on nature (Aur. 1:1) and its manner of generation and he does not attempt to rise above it or sink below it. It is true that he has much to say of the glories of heaven and he often rails at the devil for the confusion he has wrought, but this heaven and hell are in nature itself. The Father is nature as a whole (Aur. 3:13) and all the forces of nature proceed from the Father. (A. 3:16.) "He is the beginning and end of all things and outside of him is nothing." (A. 3:32.) The Son is the "heart in all the forces of the Father" (A. 3:37) and is a light in their midst "generated by all the forces of the Father from eternity" without which the Father would be "a dark valley." The Holy Ghost "is the living motion in all the forces of the Father." (A. 3:70.) In the Trinity itself there is no imperfection. The whole responsibility for evil lies with Lucifer. Thus we find in the *Aurora* that although the doctrine of the seven qualities is worked out in great detail there is no effort to link this doctrine with the eternal will or with evil. Here Boehme's philosophy is a pantheistic naturalism to which is inconsistently added an ethical theory of evil. "From the whole nature," he says, "with its inward birth have I learned my philosophy, astrology and theology." (A. 22:12.) Nature is the "divine salitter (probably salnitre) in the deep of the Father" (Aur. 4:20; 11:87; 15:52), a physical substance which, in its infinite spontaneous power of generation precipitates the beings and forms of life through its chemical action. The seven years (1612-1619) following the production of the *Aurora,* during which time Boehme obeyed the order of the town authorities to cease writing, gave him time to work out the relation between the eternal will, the seven forms, and

evil. In the *Three Principles* (1619) the *Three-fold Life* (1620) and the *Forty Questions* (1620) written soon after this period of reflection, we find a fairly consistent and coherent system. Here the generation of the Trinity and the generation of Eternal Nature in its seven forms coincide as described in the previous chapter, whereas in the Aurora each person of the Trinity was wholly good and possessed all seven qualities. The first three are assigned to the Father who is the dark principle (T. P. 4:22), and the last three to the Son, the light principle (T. P. 2). The Holy Ghost is the third principle, the creative power of all seven.

> Sharpness, bitterness and fire are in the origin in the first principle, but God is not called God in the first principle, but anger, the source out of which evil arises. (T. P. 1:8.)

Thus in the book of the *Three Principles* evil is described as having a metaphysical root in God Himself. In the *Three Principles* Boehme frequently harks back to his first theory in an effort to avoid pantheistic naturalism.

The *Three-fold Life* is more difficult to classify because Boehme is occupied with various sorts of wills which he has not yet differentiated. In the first chapter the will of the Father is described as being "thin as a nothing." Desire makes it thick by contraction in the first nature form. This darkens it. (T. F. L. 1:28.) The second principle or light breaks the darkness. (T. F. L. 1:29.)

> The first will which is outside of nature is free from nature, but nature is born in its desire. The second will which goes out of the first, out of nature as out of its own centre is also free from nature for it dwells in the first will . . . Since it would be manifested the seven forms of eternal nature must be generated. (T. F. L. 3:19-20.) The will is the master of every work, for it has its origin out of God the Father towards nature and passes through

nature to his heart which is the end of nature, which dwells in the eternal still freedom without nature and is in nature as a peculiar principle in itself. (T. F. L. 4:48.)

This seems to mean that nature in its seven forms is between the first will and the second as the process by which the first generates the second. After Boehme had fixed on the seven forms as the process by which God is manifested he labored to find some conception of God as unmanifested, other than the first three nature forms, that is, he tried to avoid pure pantheism. He knows of a will prior to the first form, but cannot yet conceive of it as a Trinity.

In the trinity are three centres which are understood in eternal nature, but without nature they are not understood. For without nature the name of God is majesty, but in nature it is Father, Son and Holy Ghost,—miracle, counsel, force. That which is without nature profits me nothing. I could to all eternity neither feel nor see nor understand it. . . . But since the majesty has brought forth nature and revealed himself therein in three persons, so I rejoice at the revelation. (T. F. L. 4:87-88-89.)

Nevertheless he makes further efforts to evolve a theory about this unknown Deity in his next book the *Forty Questions.* "That which is before the desire (the first form), is free and a nothing and yet it is. If it were something knowable it would be a being." (40Q. 1:14.) Boehme describes it in detail (40Q. 1:14-22) as an eye which sees itself. The eye is a "will to seek itself" and so, being a circular process is eternal. (1:15.) The first two forms appear here as the first steps towards self-seeing. (1:22.) In the *Forty Questions* the abysmal will is plainly pure subjectivity and the end of nature is self-consciousness. This subjectivity or eye is the mirror of consciousness (1:15, 1:108, 11:1), a formless blank which reflects the images of nature. In spite of a clearer conception of the meaning of self-consciousness,

Boehme has not in the *Forty Questions* progressed beyond the standpoint reached in the *Three-fold Life.*

In Boehme's next three books, the *Incarnation, The Six Points* and *The Signatura Rerum,* a change has taken place in his theories, and a process is described through which the whole trinity is generated outside Eternal Nature. (Inc. II, 1:8-12.) Boehme realizes that he is in serious difficulties for, after describing this disembodied trinity he says *"denn es turbiret uns."* (Inc. II, 1:8.) While he insists throughout that Eternal Nature is just the intelligible aspect of God to be known by a deep insight into this temporal nature around us, he does not give up his attempt to know God as He is in Himself, apart from nature. In *The Incarnation* the abysmal will again serves as a starting point for thought, but there is a twofold seeking and a twofold finding.

> The will thus creates in its imagination spirit only and becomes pregnant with spirit as with the eternal knowing of the Ungrund, in the all-power of life without being. As it is then pregnant, the engenderment goes *within* itself and dwells in itself as a son in the eternal spirit . . . But in this word is a will which desires to go out into being . . . into nature and reveal the non-understanding life. (9 Texts 4:3-6) (written 1620).

There is thus an in-going and an out-going process in the abyss itself. Baader [7] who makes much of this distinction describes the generation of the trinity as an esoteric process in God and the generation of Eternal Nature as an exoteric process, or God as he appears from the outside. Thus, he concludes, Boehme is saved from pantheism and his philosophy can serve as a basis for Christianity. Of this trinity outside Eternal Nature Boehme is compelled to say that the Father wants nothing and yet has a desire to generate a Son. The desire to generate nature is a painful hungry desire, but

[7] Baader, *Vorlesungen und Erläuterungen zu Boehme's Lehre.*

the desire to generate the Son is a pleasure desire. Boehme calls this pleasure *"Lust,"* [8] as distinguished from the painful desire which he calls *"Begehren," "Begierde,"* or *"Sucht"* (later German *Sehnsucht*). Thus in the *Signatura Rerum* (1621) which takes the same standpoint as *The Incarnation* we find:

> All life, growth, and motion consists in two things, in Lust and Begierde. The Lust is a free will, a nothing as compared to nature, but the Begierde is a hunger. In the Begierde arises the spirit which causes motion, that is the natural, and in the Lust the supernatural, which is yet natural, though its natural quality only comes from the Begierde. The Begierde impels the essences as it is a hunger, and the Lust is the hunger's substance (food) which it takes into itself, for the Begierde is only a hungry will and the spirit of nature in its forms, but the Lust is out of the freedom; for God is without Begierde as concerning His own being. As far as He is called God He needs nothing, being all. But He has a Lustwillen and He is Himself this will to reveal Himself in the Lust, although in the free Lust no manifestation is possible, for it is without the Begierde. The Lust is as nothing compared to nature, but it is the satisfaction (Erfullung) of nature. It freely gives itself over to the hunger of nature for it is a spirit without substance like a nothing, but the Begierde makes it substantial. (S. R. 6:1-2.)

The unsubstantial pleasure will thus manifests itself first by becoming a painful desire and then by fulfilling itself as a substantial pleasure will. It can win no reality except through pain.

In the *Six Points* we find similarly that God has two desires, "one for the word, one for the light or the manifestation of the word." (S. P. 1:31.) Then "the heart is pregnant with light and the first will pregnant with nature." (S. P. 1:32.) God, to manifest Himself, deliberately renounces his pleasure will, becomes a painful will or natural

[8] As there is no exact English equivalent for the German "Lust" it is rendered by the early English translators as *"lubet."*

process and thus wins, through the seven forms, a new pleasure will which is real and substantial, because it holds within itself an unmanifested opposing will. "God desires only light that he may shine forth in wisdom and manifest Himself. Now this can be accomplished in no other way than through fire where the will is brought into the deepest sharpness." (S. P. 1:35-36.) "The fire is hidden in the light and gives to the light its power, strength and might so that together there is an eternal union and one without the other would not be." (S. P. 1:33.)

This brings us finally to the fourth stage of Boehme's thought. The one will has now a new part to play. It is not only the subject as distinguished from the object; it is also that which differentiates itself into subject and object, and as such it is neutral and without character of any kind. In the *Gnadenwahl* (election by grace) Boehme is considering the problem of predestination. In order to remove from God any trace of responsibility for evil he makes Him a pure empty identity. "He is not this and not that, neither evil nor good, love nor anger. It cannot be said of God [9] that he has distinction in Himself, for He is in Himself natureless, emotionless, creatureless." (Gnad. 1:3.) As such Boehme calls him the *"Ungrund,"* the *"ewige Nichts,"* the *"Stille ohne Wesen,"* the *"unfassliche Nichts,"* the *Mysterium Magnum."* One is reminded of the *"stillen Wüste der Gottheit"* of Eckhart, the Brahman of the *Upanishads,* the *Identität* of Schelling [10] and the absolute God of negative

[9] Boehme uses the term God in at least three senses, (1) as the *Ungrund,* (2) as the Trinity, (3) as the Light Principle. He often says, however, "God is only called God according to the light of his love." (S. R. 16:21.)

[10] Schelling, as is well known, derived his "Identity philosophy" from Boehme.

mystics in general. Milton may have had in mind Boehme's *Ungrund* when he wrote of

> The wide womb of uncreated night
> Devoid of sense and motion.[11]
> (Paradise Lost II, 150.)

Yet Boehme does not describe this absolute or *Ungrund* entirely by negatives. He cannot contemplate anything for more than a moment without seeing it split into two opposing phases. The Neo-Platonists and the great mystics of the Church found, in their ecstasies of union, no flood nor ebb tide in the boundless ocean of the absolute. Boehme differs from them in that he finds both. His absolute is a will. It is never without activity for it is of the essence of will to split into opposites which contend with each other.

> The first beginningless, inconceivable will bears in itself the one eternal good as a conceived will which is a son of the groundless will and yet equally eternal with it. This other will is the first will's perceptibility and finding. The groundless will is father and the conceived will is son. The out-go of the groundless will through the conceived son is the spirit. Thus the one will of the Ungrund differentiates itself by means of the first eternal beginningless conception of itself by a three-fold operation, yet it remains only one will. (Gnad. 1:5-6-12.)

Thus the one Absolute Will previous to nature is not a mere unity and never was, but is, like everything else, a trinity of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It is not only outgoing in order to create. It is also in-going in order to discover what to create. As reflected back on itself it "com-

[11] The following passage is also suggestive of Boehme:
> "This wild Abyss,
> The womb of nature and perhaps her grave
> Of neither sea nor shore nor air nor fire
> But all these in their pregnant causes mixt
> Confusedly and which thus must ever fight."
> (Paradise Lost, II, 910.)

prehends itself in an eye or general longing to a self-observation and perception." (Gnad. 1:8.) In the threefold Absolute Will; the Father is the original out-going will of the abyss; the Son is the derived in-going or "reconceived will" as Boehme calls it, and the Holy Spirit is the activity resulting from this reflection of the will on itself. The Father apart from the Son is "*ewige Nichts*" or the *Ungrund*. Though a Son is born, the Father is still the will of the *Ungrund*. As Boehme illustrates the point, a candle when lighted is still the same candle, but it appears in a new capacity. So the *Ungrund* is still the *Ungrund,* even when it becomes the Father. However, as the light of the Son is always shining, the *Ungrund* without it is an abstraction. The Father from all eternity generates the Son.

We now have in our universe two Trinities, one an ideal Trinity generated prior to nature by the reflection of the Will on itself, and the other a substantial incarnated Trinity generated through the seven forms. In the previous chapter it was shown how this latter Trinity came about through a naturalistic evolutionary process in which the empty Absolute Will attains complete objectification. Now we find that the Absolute Will itself is threefold antecedent to the natural process. Boehme says that the Father of the ideal primordial Trinity manifests Himself as the dark world of nature and the Son manifests Himself as the light world of nature. Thus there is an unmanifested Trinity prior to nature and a manifested Trinity in nature. In each Trinity the Father comes to self-knowledge through the Son, but there is a great difference in the type of self-knowledge attained. In the ideal Trinity God learns only of His possi-

bilities; in the incarnated Trinity those possibilities are attained. In the first case the Absolute Will is reflexed on itself and thereby becomes acquainted with its inherent subjective capabilities; in the second case the Will comes to complete self-knowledge by finding itself reflected in the mirror of objective nature.

Here arises a new problem. We have studied in detail in the doctrine of the seven forms, the character of the mirror of Eternal Nature in which the will sees itself as finally perfected in harmonized life. But what is the character of this first mirror prior to nature in which the will sees its possibilities reflected? It appears from Boehme's accounts that there is in the Absolute Will itself a certain inherent structure by virtue of which it wills this particular world rather than some other. It discovers in itself a plan of creation. Here we face again, even in the subjective Absolute Will, the old, and ever present, duality of subjective and objective elements. God's will, like all will, is both active and passive. There is pure self-assertion in it and there is also an objective given element discovered when the will is turned back on itself. Apparently creation is not purely an arbitrary matter. Boehme's philosophy is not wholly a voluntarism. God must, by His very nature, do some things rather than others. What then is the nature of this objective or given element in God Himself prior to creation?

We are about to discover a new and important character in Boehme's Cosmic Drama. The form or structure of the Absolute Will by virtue of which this world is planned rather than some other world is called the "mirror of divine wisdom" or the "divine imagination." It is personified as

the "Heavenly Virgin Sophia," the "*Jungfrau der Weisheit.*" This first dim stage of objectivity is the passive material with which the active will first works. Boehme, therefore, considers wisdom to be feminine just as he considers the active will to be masculine.[12] This Celestial Maiden is not merely a creature of Boehme's pictorial imagination, however vividly he may personify her. She is a profound and significant philosophical conception. Without her the active will could not create. It would be wholly capricious and would have no material in which to work. Her place in Boehme's philosophical system is difficult to find because she appears in so many rôles. She exercises to the full the feminine privilege of changing her mind and name. Thus, we find her appearing as (1) the mirror of Deity, (2) the Mother of God, (3) the Divine Imagination, (4) the idea as the model of the world, (5) as that which is manifested in Eternal Nature, (6) man's heavenly genius, (7) the bride of the soul, (8) the mother of the reborn. In all these various appearances wisdom plays the same rôle. She always remains the passive idea which, when wedded to active will, gives birth to new life. She is the given objective element in which the will sees its possibilities reflected. The will is the subjective creative element. The union of the two produces life which then becomes a new given element for a new act of will. Accordingly wisdom appears to play a varied rôle, because, each time she comes forth in the cosmic drama she manifests a higher and different type of existence. Beginning as the vaguest possible structural characteristics of the subjective abysmal will, she finally in the

[12] "Reason," says Schopenhauer, using Boehme's figure, "is feminine in nature; it can only give after it has received. Of itself it has nothing but the empty forms of its operation." Schopenhauer, *World as Will and as Idea,* p. 165.

last act stands before God, mirroring his completed life.[18]

Let us first examine her at the beginning of her career. All of Boehme's later works begin with a terrific verbal struggle to get the universe started and the panting reader endeavors as best he can to

> Follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought.

The following passage is typical of many efforts to describe the first vague beginnings of the cosmic process in the dark abyss.

As the first will is an Ungrund to be regarded as eternal nothing, we recognize it to be like a mirror wherein one sees his own image.

[13] Boehme follows an ancient precedent in this personification of Divine Wisdom. She often appears in Hebrew literature. In Prov. 8 Wisdom speaks:

> "The Lord formed me in the beginning of His way
> Before his works of old.
> I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning
> Or ever the earth was.
> When there were no depths I was brought forth
> When there were no fountains abounding with water.
>
> "When He marked out the foundations of the earth
> Then was I by Him as a master workman
> And I was daily His delight, sporting always before Him."

In the apochryphal Wisdom of Solomon, 7:25-26, we find:

> "For she is a breath of the power of God
> And a clear effulgence of the glory of the Almighty.
> For she is an effulgence from everlasting light.
> And an unspotted mirror of the working of God."

In the Wisdom of Solomon, 10:5: "She preserved the first formed father of the world that was created alone and brought him out of his fall." In the book of Enoch she descends from heaven to earth, but is rejected of men and returns to await the Messianic age. The Gnostic systems placed her as one of the mediators between man and God. Sometimes she appears as the lost æon to be redeemed. She is also the second Sephiroth in the Kabbalah. Boehme may have been influenced by Weigel, who says of her:

"This heavenly Eve has from eternity been mother of the son of God in the Trinity. This wisdom which is there the word of God, is a virgin who, when born in bodily form, has borne Christ in the flesh for us in the world." Postille, II, 286.

It is like a life and yet no life, but an image and a figure of life. It is like an eye which sees, yet the seeing is without substance. Also we recognize that the eternal Ungrund without nature, is a will, like an eye wherein nature is hidden, like a hidden fire which burns not, which is and is not. It is not a spirit, but a form of spirit like the reflection in a mirror. For all the form of spirit is seen in the reflection or in the mirror and yet there is nothing which the eye or mirror sees; but its seeing is in itself for there is nothing before it that were deeper there . . . And so it is to be understood concerning the eternal hidden wisdom of God which resembles an eternal eye without substance. It is the Ungrund and yet sees all, yet without essence . . . But no seeing is without spirit, so is also no spirit without seeing.[14] Understand then that the seeing shines out of the spirit, which is its eye and mirror, wherein the will is revealed. For the seeing makes a will in which the Ungrund can find no ground nor limit; therefore its mirror goes into itself and makes a ground in itself, that is a will. Thus the mirror of the eternal eye shines forth in the will and generates to itself another eternal ground, in itself. This is its centre or heart from which the seeing continually takes its rise from eternity and through which the will becomes moving and directive of that which the centre generates. For all consists in will and is a being which in the eternal Ungrund takes its rise in itself, enters into itself, grasps itself in itself and makes the centre in itself, but with that which is grasped passes out of itself. It is its own self, and yet as compared to nature it is a nothing; that is, as compared to conceivable being. Yet it is all and all arises from it.

Here we understand the eternal triad of the Deity and the ungrounded wisdom. For the eternal will which contains the eye or the mirror wherein the eternal seeing exists as its own wisdom is Father. And that which is eternally comprehended in the wisdom, where that which comprehends, passing out of the Ungrund into the ground, conceives a ground or centre in itself, is Son or heart. . . . And the going-into-itself to the centre of the ground is Spirit, for it is the finder who from eternity continually finds where there is nothing. Then the mirror of the eye, the Father's and Son's wisdom, becomes manifested and wisdom thus stands before the spirit of God who in it manifests the Ungrund . . . Thus the essence of the Deity is everywhere in the deep of the

[14] We would say, no subject without object and no object without subject. Therefore the will must have itself for an object as there is nothing else.

Ungrund like as a wheel or eye, where the beginning possesses the end . . . Thus we are to understand the being of the deepest Godhead without and beyond nature. (S. P. 1:7-30.)

Some of the difficulties in this passage are due to Boehme's figure. It is not easy to imagine an eye which sees itself. The important thing to observe is that wisdom stands both at the beginning and the end of the first evolution of Trinity. This first circular process is purely ideal and is followed later by a similar substantial circular process involving nature. Wisdom both begins and ends the process.

She is the first eternal beginning and the first eternal end like an eye by which the spirit sees what is in eternity and what it might reveal therein. (II Inc. 1:11.)

Wisdom is at once that which is determined by the will and that which makes the will determinate.

All being is an eye inclosed like a mirror where the will sees what it is. In the seeing the will becomes desiring and models itself in its desire and this model is the mirror wherein the will sees what it is and this mirror is the wisdom. (II Inc. 1:9.)

Boehme's many long and confused descriptions of what takes place previous to nature may be disentangled somewhat as follows:

Wisdom in her first capacity is the form or structure of the One Will of the *Ungrund*. She is here the empty mirror of consciousness, but this mirror, though lacking in images, has a definite peculiarity of construction. Although the Abyss is a purely subjective bottomless Will, an "*ewige Nichts,*" yet there is inherent in it a law, reason or wisdom through which it acts in one way rather than another. By virtue of this first "virgin" or "wisdom" it becomes turned back on itself, that is, it becomes its own object. This "reconceived will" turned back on itself is the Son, born of the Virgin. Interaction of the out-going will of the Father

and the in-going will of the Son produces the Holy Ghost, the first dim life of the Trinity. As a result of this creative process Wisdom reappears not as at first an empty structure, but now as a world of forms or the Divine Imagination. The blank mirror of consciousness has filled up with images. The empty threefold will has acquired a body of Idea. Will, by turning back on itself, has become aware of its possibilities. The "reconceived" or determinate will has chosen out of the infinite possibilities of the *Ungrund,* or indeterminate will, certain images which now serve as a divine plan of creation, a model of the world to be. Determinate and indeterminate are here to be considered in a relative sense. The will of the *Ungrund* was not wholly indeterminate for there was a wisdom or rational structure inherent in it, but as a result of the first trinitarian process it becomes more determinate and creates or "imagines" a definite plan of creation. Wisdom is, in both cases, the objective constitutive element, first as the rational structure, then as the images. The difference between the first and second wisdom is almost the difference between a theoretical and a value consciousness, a will to know in general and a will with a purpose set on a definite good.

After the second Wisdom which is the Divine plan and image of the Trinity is created through the threefold will, a new movement of the threefold will takes place and the result is a new image of the Trinity in the mirror of Wisdom. This second creative process takes place through the seven forms of nature, the first three manifesting the Father and the last three the Son and it ends in Eternal Nature the final, and complete objectification of the threefold will. Eternal Nature is again called Wisdom (T. P. 22:77) for

in it God sees Himself mirrored, not as He might become, but as He really is. This might be called Wisdom in her third capacity. The second mirror of Wisdom showed God his possibilities, the third showed Him his actualities. The second was a plan, the third the realization of the plan. In the first movement of the threefold will the images in the mirror result from the selective power of the Divine attention, working in the chaos of the *Ungrund,* just as man, out of the infinite possibilities of nature around him, puts his attention on certain objects. In the second movement of the threefold will these images were incarnated in Eternal Nature just as man, having selected certain objects for attention transforms them through action to the stuff of his own existence.

The form of Boehme's logic is therefore:—first the virgin, then a creative act of the threefold will, then the virgin, then a creative act of the threefold will, then the virgin and so on. The will acts and views its action internally as Life, the Holy Spirit. This is *Verstand.* The will then views its creation externally as Idea or Reason. This is *Vernunft.* In the latter case the will sees before it a new Wisdom reflecting its possibilities in the next creative act. Evolution thus progresses in an ascending chain of cycles, each incarnation of Wisdom being higher than the last. She is in every case the passive objective Idea in which the active subjective will works to produce a new being, who is the Son born of the Virgin.[15]

[15] Boehme uses this conception in his long and elaborate discussions of Adam's creation and fall. Adam, created in the image of God was both sexes at once and so could create "magically" like God. When he slept the heavenly Sophia, idea or wisdom, left him and he woke to find this aspect of his will incarnated in Eve. Thus according to Boehme active will predominates in man, and passive will in women and accordingly it takes both

We shall see before we go much further that in this brief summary the plot of our cosmic drama appears too simple and undramatic. There is a villain in the story and a resultant tragedy, which calls forth heroic sacrifice.

Wisdom in her first capacity as the *a priori* form of the empty subjective will might be compared to Kant's categories.[16] She is thus the possibility of experience in general. Kant's pure forms of space, time, causality, etc., are in themselves *"Nichts"* in Boehme's sense of the word, but they condition all experience. They are the inherent forms of the subjective will, by virtue of which this world is experienced as spatial, temporal, causal, and the like. Kant would agree with Boehme that the world without these forms or the forms without the world would be an *Ungrund.* "Without the spirit the wisdom is no being and the spirit without the wisdom would not be revealed, and the one without the other would be an Ungrund." (II Inc. 1:10.) Boehme, of course, knew nothing of such categories as are involved in Kant's theory of the structure of the mirror of consciousness, but he seems to have been aware that the mirror had some sort of structure, that it was not wholly indeterminate and

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to create. This same dichotomy into masculine and feminine elements appears everywhere. As Coventry Patmore says:

> "Nature with endless being rife
> Parts each thing into 'him' and 'her,'
> And in the arithmetic of life
> The smallest unit is a pair."
>
> *The Angel in the House,* Bk. XII.

[16] This comparison is made by Weisse, *Jakob Boehme und seine Bedeutung für unsere Zeit.* Zeitsch f. Philos. u. Spekul. Theol. XVI. This article is the only serious effort with which I am familiar to analyze Boehme's important idea of the mirror of the Ungrund.

In my brief discussion of this point I have not distinguished, as Kant does, between the forms of perception and of understanding. The term experience is used in its broad sense.

irrational and that it evolved by becoming aware of its own inherent forms.

Wisdom in her second capacity as the model of creation is comparable to Plato's realm of ideas. Out of the clear mirror which is the mother of God comes the ideal trinity as absolute will, relative will, and spirit. These create the images in the mirror, the plan of the world to be.

> The nothing causes the will and makes it desire and the desiring is an imagination in which the will sees itself in the mirror of wisdom, so it imagines out of the Ungrund into itself and makes in the imagination a ground in itself and impregnates itself with the imagination out of the wisdom. . . . The will is Father and the conceived is Son, and the imagination of the will, the vision of form in the mirror, becomes pregnant with force and color. (II Inc. 2:1-2.)

The vision of form in the mirror is sometimes called "The idea, the express image of God, a form of Divine names." (177Q. 5:3.) She is not a particular but a universal.

> The eternal wisdom is a figure or spirit in colors, wonders, and virtues and is yet not a particular, but entirely a whole in infinite form. (Gnad. 5:5.)

As such she is a model for creation.

> The desire of the Trinity is an eternal Magus and makes being. It brings things to a ground according to the model which the spirit has opened in the wisdom. Out of it the creation came forth according to the model in the mirror of the virgin-like wisdom. (40Q. 1:118.)

Though this ideal world of Boehme's resembles the realm of ideas it does not have the absolute character which Plato assigned to it. It is a creation of subjective will. Here again we see how Boehme stands at the transition between Platonic objectivism and Kantian subjectivism. Boehme as

the philosopher of life cannot derive existence either wholly out of the objective as did Plato or wholly out of the subjective as did Kant's successors. Life, for Boehme, is a circular process which arises out of an organic union of subjective and objective. Platonic idea and Kantian will are both too thin to support life. Only in their union do we find food strong enough to nourish the soul.

The creation of the ideal world or Divine plan is only a step toward the creation of substance. The ideal is as Boehme describes it "a life, yet not a life." In it thought and reality are identical. God is like a dreamer who is conscious, but not genuinely self-conscious. He encounters no real obstacle which might awaken him to self-knowledge. Wisdom in the ideal world creates "magically" without the "fire soul" or masculine principle. She is a virgin indeed. She has a Son in the Spirit but as yet no son in the flesh.

The accounts of this first formal trinitarian process are always followed by a warning from the author that we are now getting down to a very serious and terrible business and must fortify ourselves so that we can pass through the very depth of hell in order to get back as a real unity the merely ideal unity which we shall have abandoned. Let us trace briefly this second or naturalistic trinitarian process as described in *Incarnation II* and the *Mysterium Magnum.* In the former, after reading of the birth of the formal Trinity, we pass through a "grim portal" (*gar ernstliche Pforte*) and are confronted with the statement that "without pain and poison no life is possible." (4:1.) Then the wheel of nature begins to turn in the lower ternary. (4:6.) This is "the material world which is a hunger after life." (4:7.) "Before the fire it is dumb without feeling." (4:7.) "But it is a seed of life where life grows out of destruction." "It

makes itself and has no maker, but only the strong will toward the fire life." (4:8.) But the *Ungrund* also "has no life, nor movement nor feeling." (4:9.) These two, nature and spirit, find each other in fire, the fourth form, "for fire has two causes, one cause is the will-spirit in the heart, the Father's other will or the Son, the other cause is the matter of the will, the wheel of the essences of life," the chamber of anguish.

"If there were no matter there would be no spirit or finding. The Ungrund finds itself in the harsh darkness as a spirit, which has found itself through pain. . . . Thus is freedom kindled as light wherein it sees what it is." (5:4.) "The fire takes in itself the light's property as gentleness and the light takes in itself the fire's property as life and so finds itself." (5:3.) *"Ohne Quaal kann keine Offenbarung sein"* [17] (5:3.) "Thus life arises out of death" (5:10) because life is the fire which exists by consuming matter. "But it gives back a nobler than it has destroyed, it gives spirit for matter." (5:6.) "Thus God the Father who is the Ungrund is revealed through fire" and "the other will goes out through fire (as light) and fulfills the first will." (5:7.) The total result is "that the forms of the divine wisdom through the movement of the Father's will are incorporated spirits or angels." (5:5.) Boehme says "angels" because he is describing the whole evolutionary process. In man "the half-dead angel" it has obviously not reached its conclusion, but any man may become an angel by centering his will on the light. The first five chapters of *Incarnation II* form an interesting description of the union of form and substance, ethically conceived, and portrayed in highly figurative language.

[17] "Without pain there is no manifestation."

In the *Mysterium Magnum* Boehme calls the first threefold will "the eternal understanding." Here its three parts are, the eternal will which is Father, an eternal mind of the will, which is Son, and an out-going from both the will and mind which is spirit. (M. M. 1:3-4.) It is *"kein Wesen,"* like the understanding in man which is without time or place (1:5.) That which goes out from the will is the *Lust* of the Deity, or the eternal wisdom. This wisdom is a cause of all the forces, but in it they all lie "like properties without weight limit or measure and unseparated from each other." (1:7.)

> This is the eye of the Ungrund, the eternal chaos wherein all lies whether it is in time or eternity . . . it is not far from anything nor near anything, it is through all and in all, its birth is everywhere and without it is nothing. (1:8.)
>
> In it is neither darkness nor light, thickness nor thinness, joy nor sorrow, sensibility nor perception. It brings itself to a "lust" in order to behold itself. Seeing itself in the wisdom it brings itself into a desire to perceive itself in smells, tastes, colors, forces and virtues. There would be no feeling in the free spiritual lust if it did not bring itself into a desire like a hunger. (3:4.)

This second or hungry desire Boehme then describes at length as nature generating in its first three forms. We now have two things in our universe. First a divine mind or understanding which is without real existence. In reference to wrathful nature "it is a nothing" (3:25) because it is a one "which would do continually one and the same thing." (4:22.) It is happy, but it does not know it (4:22), hence it has not real happiness. Secondly we have a nature-will which is real because it contains an opposition. But it is unhappy as it cannot overcome the opposition. Each then has what the other wants. The result is "that the two now go towards and permeate each other." [18] (3:25.) When

[18] *"Diese beide gehen nun gegen einander und in einander."*

the nature-will (*Begierde*) and spirit will (*Lust*) thus enter each other the flash (*Blitz*) is kindled. In the flash the kingdoms of darkness and light come into existence and the divine birth is in full operation (M. M. 4) in all seven forms. In this process the three principles are conceived as generated from the three wills of the ideal triune Godhead. The first will, the Father, "pregnant with nature" through a painful desire generates the lower ternary. The second will, the Son or word, "pregnant with light" through the pleasure desire generates the higher ternary, and the third will through a speaking of the word generates the holy life, the final manifestation of hidden divine wisdom. Thus even God must lose his life in order to save it. God the dreamer must pay the supreme penalty of death on the cross of matter in order to awake from dreams to real self-knowledge. Self-consciousness and self-sacrifice are interdependent. Self-consciousness arises out of a real contrast between subject and object, a contrast which does not exist in the world antecedent to nature. God cannot have a real object without a will wholly independent of his own. This independence is death. Creation begins with a painful separation from God and the creation of an independent will to the end that this separation may be overcome in a type of unity higher than that with which the process began. The ascending path of evolution first goes down then up. Christ descended into hell on His way to heaven. God, and man also, must leave the oneness of subjectivity and pass downward through the hell of the many separated wills to rise to the heaven of the many in one which is life. This new unity is higher because it is an achieved unity, the basis of knowledge.

The perpetual outflow of the will causes the good to long to stand still again and it desires to repenetrate the One, and in such pene-

tration the One becomes mobile and desireful. In such action arises sensation, knowledge, and will. (Beschau. 1:16.)

Boehme inconsistently explains that God is, in his first state, good, and wants nothing, but desires to realize His goodness by developing an opposing will. "The Divine Understanding leads itself into fire that its Lust may become a light . . . but *the all* does not need *the something.* The something is only its play." (M. M. 3:21.) But what have been previously described as the terrible birth pains of nature to bring forth the light hardly seem like "play." Such writers on Boehme as Baader, Hamberger, Penny, Freher, and others, make much of this perfection of God prior to nature, whereby Boehme avoids pantheism; but the "threefold will" in its first condition is obviously unstable and must fulfill itself through creation. It is an abstraction, a universal in the Hegelian sense, which goes out of itself, particularizes itself and opposes itself that it may reach a deeper unity in concrete being. Like Hegel,[10] Boehme finds the

[10] Hegel in the chapter on Boehme in his *History of Philosophy,* finds much of his own system in Boehme. Boehme's manifested Trinity is, he says, "Absolute Substance" (p. 212). The "anguish" in God is "negativity" (p. 287), Fursichsein, absolute affirmation, the being for self, the inward imagining of self, the evil or matter, the I=I, necessary for manifestation. "So," says Hegel, "this is the greatest depth of thought reached by Jacob Boehme" (p. 216). It is, to quote further, "the generating of light by the most living dialectic" (p. 216). Nevertheless, in spite of Boehme's profound insight, Hegel criticizes him because he uses *"Wirklichkeit als Begriff,"* that is he substitutes that which has actuality as immediate fact, be this fact merely determinate being or explicitly the expression of a principle which it contains within itself, for a thought. Because Boehme has not the *Begriff* there is a most "frightful and painful struggle" between his mind and his powers of expression. In his efforts to introduce unity into all things, Hegel believes, he forces his opposites together by a great mental effort. Since reason does not hold them together; their union shatters the actuality possessed by both. Yet Hegel acknowledges that such is not always the case and that there does stand in the background "the purest speculative thought," which approximates "the form of self-consciousness." In this criticism Hegel is probably making too much of Boehme's figurative vocabulary, although such is the effect of language on thought that Boehme often, no doubt, conceived his "qualities" as physical objects or emotions.

element of negativity essential to any conception of the Absolute. Mere light is mere darkness.

As we have discovered elements of Hegel and Schopenhauer in Boehme it is not surprising to find Boehme and Hartmann in close accord because Hartmann's philosophy was a deliberate combination of that of Hegel and Schopenhauer. The logical idea of Hegel cannot, thought Hartmann, attain reality without will nor can the blind irrational will of Schopenhauer determine its prototypal ideas. The former cannot "explain" the irrational, the latter the rational. Hence the Absolute Spirit has two attributes, blind will and powerless idea. (Boehme's Father and Virgin.) The will, mirroring itself in the idea, comes to consciousness, and the world of existence unfolds through a union of the two. The will posits the that, the idea the what. All natural processes, as active, show will; as conforming to an end they show idea. Idea leads the world to the greatest possible development of self-consciousness. So far Boehme would agree. But Hartmann goes further and finds that the most highly developed

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These qualities or forms are much like Hegel's *"Bestimmung,"* the original latent nature which being possesses in consequence of its *"ansich,"* its power, capacity or fitness for external relationship.

If we take into account the different ways in which Hegel himself uses the term *Begriff* we might question the justice of his criticism. Hegel's *Begriff* can have an objective or a subjective meaning, in fact its use as defining a thought process whose evolution according to its principles and law is conceived of as an objective world of rational fact depends upon this double use. The *Begriff* is not only the principle which governs the whole universe, but is applied likewise to the concrete embodiments of that principle. In the process of its evolution it wins the immediacy possessed by *Wirklichkeit.* Hegel permits us to confuse *Begriff* and *Wirklichkeit* in the final stage of evolution, that of the Absolute, which is at once the world process and its consummation. If *Begriff* did not determine both thought and things it could not be a process whose outcome is the unity of self-consciousness. On the whole, although Boehme vaguely foreshadows the Hegelian dialectic process in his theory by which the abstract God wins concrete being as Eternal Nature, he does not conceive of creation as a logical necessity so much as a moral necessity. At this point he is closer to Fichte.

consciousness overcomes all subjective will, and with this denial of the will, the world process ceases. Boehme would say that the highest development of one is accompanied by the highest development of the other as the two opposites are always necessary to each other. Hence Boehme's world process like Hegel's is eternal, while Hartmann's is temporal. In general Boehme's unmanifested Trinity resembles the Trinities of thinkers who preceded him, particularly the schoolmen. They divided God according to the Platonic parts of the soul. Boehme's manifested Trinity suggests the thought systems which came after him which occupied themselves with epistemological problems. Cusa's Trinity of Father as moving cause; Son as formal cause and Spirit as final cause is suggestive of Boehme's first Trinity. So are Schelling's three wills of the *Ungrund,* a thought borrowed directly from Boehme. The psychological division of the mind into thought, feeling and will is not far from Boehme's conception of the ideal Trinity. (T. P. 7:25.) The end of action then becomes the unification of the three through an operation involving nature.

The Virgin Sophia, the mirror in which the threefold will sees itself, has been analyzed as a cold philosophical abstraction, but to Boehme she is an ideal which awakens the most powerful emotion. Again and again he apostrophizes her in glowing poetic language.

> When, in the light of nature we consider our mind; what it is that makes us eager, which burns there like a light, and is greedy like fire, which desires to receive where it has not sown, and to reap in that land where the body is not at home, then the precious maiden of the wisdom of God meets us in the midst of the light of life and says; mine is the light, the power and the glory, mine is the gate of knowledge. I live in the light of nature and without me thou can'st

not see nor know my power. I am thy bride in the light and thy longing after my power is my drawing to myself. I sit on my throne, but thou knowest me not. I am in thee, but thy body is not in me. I make distinctions, but thou seest it not. I am the light of the mind. The root of the mind is not in me, but near me. I am the root's bride, but he has put on a rough coat. I will not lay myself in his arms until he puts that off and then I will rest eternally in his arms and adorn the root with my power and give him my beautiful form and espouse myself to him with my Pearl. (T. P. 16:3.)

She appears to our author when he is in the depths of despair.

The Virgin has given me her promise not to leave me in my need. I will go through thorns and thistles, through scorn and disgrace, till I come again to my own native country out of which my soul has wandered, where my dear virgin dwells. I rely upon the promise she made when she appeared to me that she would turn my sorrow into joy. As I lay upon the mountain at midnight and all the trees fell over me, and the storm beat upon me, and Antichrist opened wide his jaws to devour me, she came and comforted me and wedded herself to me. (T. P. 14:52.)

This was a real and important experience. In a second account of it Boehme speaks of his philosophic knowledge as first coming with "the rose which stands in the centre of Paradise in the hand of the virgin which she reached down to me in the same place where she came to me in the gate of the deep and offered me her love, as I lay on the mountain at midnight in the storm." (T. P. 18:62.) In some places, particularly in his short treatise *Of True Repentance,* Boehme's dialogue with the Virgin is so fervent as to lead to the suspicion that other emotions are entering in than those usually considered permissible in philosophy. On the whole, however, Boehme's Virgin appears free from sex. She is the vision of a higher, holier life. At her appearance

"the soul is so astonished and amazed at its uncleanness that all its sins immediately awake in it and it trembles before her." (True Repentance 45.) "Putting herself in the paradisiacal centre of the soul she continually warns it of its evil ways." (T. P. 15:46.) The heavenly *Jungfrau* was the image of God in which Adam was created. When Adam fell this image left him. (T. P. 13:8.) But not entirely. She still knocks inwardly at the door of man's soul. (T. P. 17:114), or hovers outwardly before him in a constellation, or some awful aspect of nature. In the beauty of fruits and the fragrance of flowers she inspires in him a yearning for the paradise whence he fell. (T. P. 14:32-46.)

We get a clear hint as to her metaphysical status in relation to man in Boehme's frequent statement that she is "the bride of the soul." (T. P. 15:46.) The soul is made up of the first four forms of nature. The light is the Son of God and the soul in fire and darkness longs for the light. Here Boehme's figures of speech come into full play. As the Virgin Mary bore Jesus, so the dark nature-will of the Father (the lower ternary) in the soul unites with the Virgin, the Heavenly Wisdom or Idea, and a Son is born. He is a new will centered on the good. Thus the union of subjective will and objective idea realizes the light of true and immediate knowledge which is the Son of God.

> We must set our desiring will again on the Heavenly Virgin and receive the virginal essence and property wherein God dwells where the soul's image may again reach the sight of God. (Inc. I, 12:1.) So we recognize His virginity led into us for our virginity. Then His love and virginity has wedded with our cold love and virginity and therein it results that God and man are only one person. (Inc. I, 9:5.)

The Virgin is thus not only the bride of the soul, she is

the mother of the reborn. We have described the rebirth of God and the rebirth of Nature. The rebirth of man proceeds on the same principle. As God bears his Son the Light, as Mary bore Jesus, the Virgin must bear the new man. "Out of the same virginity from which Christ was born must we all be born." (Inc. 1:11.) This comes about through Imagination, the process by which the will acquires substance by uniting with objective Idea.

> It is now recognized wherein our rebirth stands . . . merely in the Imagination that we with our will go into God's will and give ourselves entirely and singly to Him which is called faith. For the word faith does not mean accepting the historical, but it is an intaking of the Being of God, an eating of God, a bringing of God's Being into the Soul-fire by means of the Imagination, therewith to satisfy its hunger; it is clothing ourself with the Being of God not as with a cloak, but as with a body of the Soul. (I Inc. 11:8.)

The Divine Wisdom gives to man the direction of his goal but the element of risk and uncertainty is not eliminated. William James describes an "aching void" in which the searcher for a forgotten name dimly senses what he seeks without being able to bring it clearly to consciousness. The searcher knows the name well enough to recognize it when he hears it and yet he does not know it well enough to reproduce it. In his mind there is a dim structural outline which does not become substantially filled with matter. Such is the vision of Wisdom which the mystic receives by contact with the All. He sees her and he sees her not. She is the vague vision the artist has of his picture before he paints it, or the author's idea of his book before he writes it. She is the objective, the ideational, the constitutive; the will is the subjective, the affective, the evaluative. As the will brings her to reality, she determines the will and is

determined by it, and creation proceeds as the dual product of the subjective impulse and the objective vision.[20]

This philosophy combines voluntarism and mysticism in a way that suggests two such widely different types of thought as those of William James and Saint Paul. James suffered the same inner conflict as Boehme experienced.[21] He desired a universe in which there was peace and security. He desired also a dramatic world with real conflict between good and evil. Out of the first came his mysticism and out of the second his pragmatism. But James never succeeded in completely reconciling the two. His second interest finally prevailed. He rejected Absolutism in all its forms. Boehme was more naïve and dogged. The faith-mysticism of the philosopher of Görlitz was more like that of St. Paul. Faith was to St. Paul more than a pragmatic leap in the dark. Christ had overcome the world already and man could share in that victory. There must first be a "dying with Christ" to the bondage of the external in order that man may be raised up with Him into the freedom of the Spirit.

[20] "While the harmony of logic lies upon the universe as an iron necessity, the æsthetic harmony stands before it as a living ideal moulding the general flux in its broken progress toward finer subtler issues." Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World,* p. 28.

[21] Bixler, *Religion in the Philosophy of William James,* Chapter I.

Cruel works
Of many wheels I view, wheel without wheel with cogs tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other, not as those in Eden which
Wheel within wheel in freedom revolve, in harmony and peace.

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Jerusalem.*

CHAPTER VII

GOOD AND EVIL

Boehme considered his philosophy valuable only in so far as it contained the basis for ethics. Its sole object was to show men how to lead a good life. Not only does he continually repeat the warning that his books are not intended to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but he declares that theory alone cannot grasp his meaning. Only those who have actually experienced rebirth into the light can understand it. He abjures his readers in these words, "You must follow the flights of my soul, not of my pen."

He who will not seek to be a new man born in God let him not meddle with my writings. He will not be able to understand my meaning unless he enters into the resignation in Christ where he may apprehend the spirit of the universal. Otherwise all is to no purpose. (S. R. 37:38.)

Every one says "show me the way to the revelation of the good." Hear, dear Reason (*Vernunft*), you must yourself become the way. The understanding (*Verstand*) must be born in you, otherwise I cannot show it to you. You must enter into it so that the understanding as a practical art (*Verstand in Handgriffen*), in which I do not deal, may be opened in you. I write only in a spirit of observation, how the generation of good and evil is, and I open the well. He shall draw water whom God has appointed. (S. R. 14:1.)

Yet we cannot accept these assertions of exclusive practical intention too literally. Boehme placed some value on theory or he would not have filled his books with it. In fact it is the perpetual tension between theory and practice and the perpetual overcoming of this strain which is the motive

power behind his philosophy of life. We have confronted the problem of theory versus practice in many forms. Let us face it again in an effort to determine Boehme's conception of the nature of goodness. In terms of ethics our fundamental problem may assume some such form as this, does Boehme base his ethics on his metaphysics or his metaphysics on his ethics? Does he give a rational explanation of good and evil as based on the structure and quality of the universe or does he determine the nature of the universe through an observation of the nature of good and evil as he finds them in his own experience of life? Does he base the practice of goodness on a theory about it or a theory about it on the practice of goodness?

This question is fundamental. In general the rationalist tends to base his ethics on his metaphysics; that is, he endeavors to give a reason for goodness and evil by showing how they result necessarily from the character of the universe as a whole. In so doing he makes evil less evil and good less good. If there is a reason for evil it serves a good purpose, therefore it is a good. In that case goodness also vanishes, for it can exist only in contrast to a real evil. The rationalistic monist cannot deduce both good and evil from a single theory about the nature of things without rubbing out essential distinctions between them. He tends to treat them as illusory by making them both relative to a single all-inclusive absolute. No rationalistic system of thought has been wholly successful in preserving genuine ethics, for ethics depend on a real distinction between good and evil. Reason seeks to unite all things into a single whole. It cannot tolerate ultimate and absolute distinctions.

The voluntarist, on the other hand, tends to base metaphysics on ethics. He is the practical man who acts on the

assumption that values are real and that some one thing or condition is absolutely and fundamentally better than another. Without a dualism of value the will could not exist at all, for there would be no motive for any activity. When Boehme says that "Poison is the cause of life," he means that life exists because there is a real evil to be overcome. The wholly satisfied organism could not long survive. Practically man is a dualist because every human action is based on a bifurcation of the cosmos into good and evil; a good to be attained and an evil to be overcome. A metaphysics based on ethics assumes that the universe contains a real dualism of value. Man cannot discover that duality as final to his reason, but he can discover it in his will, for it is the basis of the will's activity.

The same disagreement between theory and practice arises in connection with the problem of freedom of the will. The feeling which accompanies every act of will is a feeling of freedom. At the moment of action the will assumes that it is determined only by itself. But the rationalist cannot conceive of a free act. Every effect has its cause and every act is a link in a long chain of cause and effect. A free and undetermined will cannot exist in a universe where there is a reason for everything. Accordingly the rationalist denies freedom. If he is thoroughgoing he will proceed further and deny that the will exists at all, a conclusion which scientific psychology has reached through consistent reasoning. The modern psychologist finds no place for the will either in his laboratory or his logic.

Is Boehme a rational monist making good and evil relative and deriving both from a single Absolute or is he an irrational voluntarist declaring that we must accept as ultimate the distinction between good and evil assumed by the will?

He is well aware of the difficulty involved in each position, but believes he has found a solution. Many times, however, he presents an appearance of helpless vibration back and forth between the two positions. In his earlier works he is predominantly irrational and voluntaristic and content to leave the origin of evil in the unknowable depths of the bottomless will. If hard pressed he takes refuge in the legend of the fall of Lucifer and says that the battle with Lucifer was "God against God" (A. 14:19), hence Lucifer could not be annihilated. But such a statement does not remove the dualism for it is a dualism of Light and Darkness within God himself, wholly inexplicable and irremediable. When the idea occurs to Boehme that since evil is a necessity, being the principle of movement and particularity, and the fuel of life and love, it must therefore have been devised by God, he begins violently to accuse the devil of giving him a devilish point of view.

> If you understand this aright you will not make a God a devil, as some do, who say God hath created the evil and that his will is that some men be lost. Men who say so help to increase the devil's lies, and bring upon themselves severe judgment. (A. 13:64.)

It is the essence of deviltry to think that evil serves a good purpose because this theory derives the lower ternary out of the higher and thus reverses the true evolutionary process. God appears as darkness and a source of evil if the imagination is centered on the lower ternary, but if it is centered on the higher He appears as He is, in His completeness, a source of pure Light. His darkness should remain hidden. It should not be an object of attention, for such attention brings it to manifestation. Boehme seems to mean that evil is not an illusion, but rather something to be ignored. It is rationalizing the irrational, making as an object of knowledge that

which should not be known because it should continue in darkness. The source of evil is inexplicable because hidden in the depths of the will. To observe it we must face the wrong way, become rationalists, and turn our backs on the light of that truer and higher knowledge which creates goodness by attention to it.

All this is as consistent as such ethical dualism permits. But Boehme apparently yields to temptation and takes the devil's point of view himself. What could be more devilish than this:

> Therefore God has introduced Himself with His holy word into nature and creature and also into pain and torment, into light and darkness, that the eternal power of his word and wisdom may be distinguishable and perceptible in order that knowledge may exist. . . .
>
> If the evil in the contrary will were not profitable, God, the one only eternal God, would not endure it, but annihilate it. But it serves for the manifestation of the glory of God and the kingdom of joy and is a tool of God whereby he makes the good imagible that the good may be known. For if there were no evil the good would not be known.
>
> If there were no anger-fire there could be no light-fire and the eternal love would be hidden for there would be nothing that could be loved. (M. M. 71:15-18.)

Here Boehme is a rationalist, who endeavors to explain all things. Evil, he concludes, is useful and serves the purpose of manifesting God's hidden goodness.

In regard to the related problem of freedom and individuality, we find the same alternation between ethical and metaphysical points of view. The ethical Boehme views man as an individual free to choose light or darkness; the metaphysical Boehme views him as the battleground of light and dark forces, whichever wins shall possess him. There exists for Boehme a world of separate wills, either for no

reason, or for a reason. If for no reason, and this position is by far the most frequent, we find that every will splits up into separate wills like the branches on a tree. The very essence of will, as has been shown, is duality. One will, like one force, could not exist without another will or force to oppose it. Each will, as it comes into existence, again splits into two opposing phases. Hence arises the *turba.* Such a view is irrational. The will has no reason for splitting up. The demonic will wills only itself and discovers to its sorrow that it thus creates the very opposition that it would overcome. But Boehme, on the other hand, is sometimes rational in declaring that God deliberates and decides to create independent individual self-wills in order to bring himself to manifestation; that his love may exist by having something to love. Here individuality becomes a logical necessity and the devil justifies his independence of God.

The problem of the origin of individuality presents no more difficulties than the problem of keeping it once it has originated. The reborn man merges his will with the Divine will, but Boehme insists that he retains his individuality, although he has become a perfect instrument of the Divine.

As the sun gives its tincture to the metallic essence and the metallic essence gives its desire to the sun's tincture, so that out of them both the fair and precious gold is generated so likewise is it to be understood concerning the soul.[1] The Deity dwells in the soul, but the soul is not to be identified with it as far as its creative power is concerned; but the eye or light of God gives its holy love-tincture from the light's lustre to the desire of the soul. The soul's desire is the creative fiat which takes the power of the holy love-tincture into itself and makes it essential; so that the divine tincture, proceeding from the true love spring, the source of living and seeing, and the soul's believing desire become one being. This is a spiritual

[1] The alchemists believed that metals like plants grew from seeds. The desire in the seed unites with the light of the sun, that the new life may be born.

being, the inward new man, a new habitation of the soul. . . . The soul is not changed into the Deity, the source of the living and seeing, for it is of the temporal and eternal nature. The Deity is not nature, but the will to nature, and manifests itself through the soul's nature. As fire manifests itself through iron, when the iron seems, as it were, pure fire and yet keeps its own nature and the fire its own, and the one dwells in the other and the one is a manifestation of the other. The iron has no power over the fire, but the fire gives itself to the iron and the iron gives its substance to the fire and thus both are changed into one and yet remain two. Thus it is to be understood with the soul and Deity. (M. M. 51: 4-7.)

Through such highly figurative language Boehme attempts to steer a course between individualism and monism, and so preserve both ethics and metaphysics.

Thus we find two apparently inconsistent points of view in Boehme's philosophy. From one angle his philosophy presents a dualism and views evil as a dark power over against God, while God is conceived of as wholly good. On the other hand, Boehme often expresses a rationalistic monism which explains evil as in God and an unfortunate though necessary condition to his manifestation as a person. There is good reason why Boehme alternates between these two positions. Sometimes he confuses the two theories because he does not see his way out of the difficulty but more often he realizes that his philosophy is based on the interplay of two opposing kinds of knowledge, *Vernunft* and *Verstand*. *Vernunft* results in a shallow rationalism which does not penetrate through the outer symbols of life. It faces the dark world and sees God as the deliberate creator of evil. Here evil appears as good. *Verstand,* the mystical experience of life, facing the light world sees God as wholly good, triumphant over evil. Life exists by overcoming this real contradiction between metaphysics and ethics, between monistic rationalism and dualistic voluntarism.

This fundamental fact will become clearer if we recapitulate the theory which may well be called the central conception in Boehme's philosophy, of the rebirth of the soul from darkness to light. The rebirth is essentially an event of ethical significance regardless of chemical or theological terms which may be used in describing it. It marks that stage in the evolutionary process when an unethical physical nature describable only in terms of reason splits up into ethical moments presented in an experience of value. After discovering this ethical dualism the reborn life overcomes it by subordinating evil to good.

The soul stands at the fourth nature form where light and darkness divide. It is the neutral point, the Abyss, the Eternal Freedom. It can project itself through imagination either into the dark world or the light world. Whichever it chooses as its goal, *it must first pass through the dark world.* This is true of God in his creation of Eternal Nature. It is also true of man. In order to act the will must first separate itself from the universal will and become an egoist. It cannot aim at the good universal or wisdom, it must aim at the evil particular or matter. This self-assertion is the first nature form, the fiat of creation. Boehme considers it "rational" because it arises out of the subjective necessity for self-assertion. It chooses the particular because nothing else can be chosen. But the particular does not satisfy the soul and as a result it is in pain. God has forced it to choose the particular, hence as a rationalist it blames God for evil. To be relieved of its pain it must give up egoism and rejoin the Absolute whence it came. This act of resignation is born of irrational faith. The soul is now no longer a monistic rationalist, but a dualist. It has discovered real evil from which it flees to the Divine plan of the one condition

that is completely valuable. Having left the world behind, it now sees God as completely good. It then passes through the Absolute and returns to the world endowed with the point of view of the Absolute. After its blind venture of faith into the unseen center of absolute values it proceeds to incarnate these values in the relative world. The particular is now no longer a source of pain. It is harmonized with the universal. A good act has been born which has reconciled the evil of particularity with the empty goodness of universality. The evil particular is not abolished, it is merely hidden because it has taken its proper place in a larger organic whole. A good act thus begins with the evil particular, passes through the empty universal and ends in a life which endows the limited particular with a universal value.

This recapitulation of the evolutionary process departs far from Boehme's vocabulary but probably remains close to his usual meaning. The dark world known to reason is not evil in itself. The reborn soul must pass through it. *Evil is arrested development* and arises only when the rebirth does not take place. It is a negative teleological direction. The lower forms of nature, in going over into the higher, become the "matter" or unseen basis of the manifestation of goodness. They become evil when chosen as an end rather than a means. Evil is actualized only when the evolutionary process halts in the lower ternary.

Boehme thus finds that we need two philosophies, one to know our world and the other to take it seriously.[2] The first is a rational philosophy and the second is a faith to venture into the unknown that the empty forms of reason may be

[2] "Since we are generated out of both worlds therefore we speak in two languages." (T. F. L. 5:26.)

filled with value and life. The first is reality defined. The second is reality experienced. Definition is of course a kind of experience, but it is a lower type. It points toward reality, but it is not reality itself. It is subjective and must be fulfilled by the objective. Christ did not come to abolish the law, which is subjective, but to fulfill it. In the lower ternary I assert only myself, that is I define the world as the fulfillment of my idea, as an expression of my reason. When I realize this brings no ultimate satisfaction I seek true objectivity by self-renunciation. I go beyond reason and make a venture of faith that there is a creative as well as a logical and mechanical process. Ethics now come into play for a genuine dualism of value has appeared. Life is a process by which a rationalistic monism continually passes over into a voluntaristic dualism; where *Vernunft* dies continually to be reborn as *Verstand*. This is Boehme's "*tägliche Himmelfahrt nach dem Willen*" (Super. Life 11) freely interpreted, a "daily journey to Heaven" undertaken not only in a complete form in the mystical experience as a religious act but in some form in every conscious movement of the will. Whether Boehme, if he were living to-day, would own this as a true interpretation of his philosophy must be left, not to reason, but to faith.

Evil is arrested development. It can also be defined as selfishness. Selfishness, though an unescapable stage in evolution, is evil when not fulfilled by unselfishness. "All sins arise out of selfishness" (S. R. 15:12), for in "selfishness" the soul's attention is centered in itself. Self-satisfaction makes progress impossible.

Every will which enters into self-blood and seeks the ground of its life's form breaks itself off from the mystery and enters into a capriciousness. It cannot do otherwise for its fellow members stir

up dying and death. It lies, and denies union with the Will of God and sets self-hood in its place, so that it goes out from unity into a desire for self. If it knew that all things have brought it forth and are its mothers, and if it did not hold its mothers' substance for its own, but in common, then greed, envy, strife and a contrary will would not arise. (S. R. 15:7-11.)

Selfishness is thus a refusal to recognize a relationship with others which is due to a common origin. Boehme's ethics, like all mystical ethics, often seem to ignore this fact and become the apparently purely individual unsocial ethics of resignation. But the fact is easily forgotten that resignation is only the prerequisite to proper social relationships. Goodness arises when all particular desires are phases of will in an harmonious system, whether in one individual or in several. "There is," says Fichte, "but one virtue and that is to forget oneself as a person. There is but one vice and that is to think of oneself." [3] Boehme's will is a will which sees itself reflected in the mirror of the world, and this world includes other souls. Its evil is therefore the elevation of an individual subjective judgment to the rank of a universal. Such an evil is "false imagination" or "phantasie" which turns back from the Virgin, the Divine Idea, to its own desire. (Gnad. 1:17.)

No account of Boehme's ethical discussions should omit some mention of the vivid and picturesque figures with which he illumines his deep doctrines. He is never weary of analyzing the fall of Lucifer. Lucifer's sin was a will for complete independence of God. This caused his fall and the fall of his legions, and as a result "the world was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep." God creates a new world out of the fallen one through the seven forms, each form being in turn operative on each of

[3] Fichte, *Characteristics of the Present Age*, p. 70.

the seven days of creation. The Sun is created in the fourth day through the fourth form. It stands therefore as a god in the material world, through whose beams of fire and light the dead earth is transformed into vegetable and animal life. Adam is created to take the place of the fallen angel. He is wedded to the Heavenly Virgin through whom he creates magically in a perfect union of will and idea. But he puts his imagination on matter and sleeps, that is, he falls from a full life to a half-dead life. The Virgin leaves him and he wakes to find her substitute, Eve. They sin through eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that is through a divided attention instead of a single mind on the good. But they have not fallen so far as Lucifer whose attention was wholly on evil. The world is now the battlefield between darkness and light, the Devil and God, and man is in great danger. Yet the prophecy is fulfilled that the "Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head." The Virgin bears a Son, Christ, the second Adam, and God becomes incarnate in man, that man may be saved, and the law be fulfilled through life.

Boehme accepts the story of the fall, creation, and redemption not only as a literal fact, but also as a symbol, spreading out through a vast period of time, of the same evolutionary process which we have been describing. In the Divine birth, in the creation of the world, in the long course of history, in the events of every human life, the same principles are operative with the same results. It is a circular process from eternity through time and then back once more to eternity. Lucifer fell from unity to plurality, from harmony to discord, from spirit to matter. Matter is the principle of divisibility, of the separation of one spirit from another. The primal sin was existence, individuality, a will

separating itself from the whole and thus acquiring an independent being. "Lucifer," says Boehme, "made two out of what was one." (A. 12:78.) After the fall this world of time in the Third Principle arose, not as a wholly evil thing, but as a temporal evolution toward the good. Independence, individuality, are finally transcended, not obliterated through the world process, and Christ typifies the regenerated man through whom new unity arises. The devil has spoiled the world, but man must redeem it, not avoid it. According to Boehme, "It is not meant that one should run from house and home, from wife and children and kindred and flee out of the world, or forsake his goods so as not to regard them; but he must kill and make as nothing the own self-will, which possesses all this for a property." (M. M. 41:55.)

In giving the will primacy over the intellect Boehme's system makes it supremely difficult to define the nature of the *summum bonum,* which is the end of all action. The essence of will is purposeful activity yet such activity is generated by want. How then can we have activity as a final goal? Boehme answers by calling the perfect state "play." In "play" life expresses itself in its fullness; therefore play as an end means that life itself has intrinsic value. Play uses nature as a means, but does not take it seriously as an end in itself. It aims, though indirectly, at the pure joy of activity. In positing "play" as an end we must never forget the circular character of the eternal process. The pure joy of activity is only a point to pass through. Pleasure turns into desire and a new tragedy develops. Boehme's "play" means that life does not consist in tension alone. It has its moments of equilibrium and victory.

Whatever runs on in nature torments itself, but that which attains nature's end is at rest without pain; it is active, but only in one

desire. All that makes anguish and strife in nature makes joy in God, for the whole host of heaven is tuned in one harmony, every angelic kingdom into a particular instrument, but all in one another as a single symphony, the one voice of God's love. Every string of every instrument exalts and gives joy to every other. It is a ravishing tasting, feeling, smelling and hearing. Whatever God is in Himself that the creature is in its desire of Him, a God-angel and a God-man. God all in all and without Him nothing else. . . . And this is the beginning and end of all things. (S. R. 15:52.)

When Boehme is speaking of God's life as it is in itself he refers to it as "play." (S. R. 16:2) (M. M. 7:19.) In heaven the seven qualities are pictured as playing with each other. (A. 11:98-101.) Adam ought to have been content to play with nature in Paradise.

As God plays with the time of this outward world, so also should the inward divine man play with the outward in the revealed wonders of God in this world, and open the Divine Wisdom in all creatures, each according to its property. (M. M. 16:10.)

Adam fell when this play became serious business, that is when nature was made an end instead of a means. The one sin is to subordinate yourself to natural objects and serve them. The one virtue is to subordinate natural objects to spirit and make them serve it and you.

Therefore, O Man, consider where thou art at home; in the stars and four elements, in the dark world with the Devils, or in the Divine power in Heaven? Whatever property is lord in thee, its servant thou art. (M. M. 10:46.)

The man who is not a servant of nature is not dependent on it for his pleasure.

He is all one with prosperity and adversity, poverty and riches, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, life and death. . . . He is a symbol of God who is in and through all and yet is as a nothing to all things. (M. M. 66:63.)

Such passages as this, which often occur, would lead us to

believe that Boehme advocated stoic indifference, whereas his use of the word "play" as an end, includes and approves æsthetic enjoyment. Resignation, however, is only a station on the way. Here "man breaks self-hood as a vessel wherein he is imprisoned." (S. R. 15:35.) Formerly he was a slave to external form, now he is free.

> Now that he is born from within out of the speaking voice of God in God's will-spirit, he goes free in the "Grund" and the "Ungrund." He is bound to no form. (S. R. 15:24.)

Expected conditions are reversed. The self-assertive man who would lord it over nature really makes himself a servant of nature; the resigned man discovers freedom in the inner ideal life and rules nature in conjunction with God's will, from within. This higher life, attained through pain, struggle, and resignation, is the seventh nature form, the perfect union of will and idea. It is not a static perfection, it is perfection of function.

Boehme stands somewhere between Schopenhauer whose ethical goal is complete denial of will and Nietzsche whose objective is complete affirmation of will. Boehme and Schopenhauer concur in asserting the pain of the will to live. Schopenhauer escapes either æsthetically by will-less contemplation of the idea as a spotless mirror of the will or by wholly effacing both will and idea. Nietzsche desires no escape because he does not know that the will-to-power is a will of pain. Boehme accepts self-effacement as a step toward a higher affirmation in which the individual will is harmonized with a higher will without losing its individuality. Though man's soul is still ego-centric his imagination becomes cosmo-centric.

> Christ's heavenly blood has tinctured us. Thereby the rent torn and divided harmony of our human properties has entered into the

harmony and unity of properties, that is, into the Light of Paradise, Love and Life, that real temperature *where variety is concentric and in accord with unity.* (Ep. 1:12.)

Schopenhauer is faced with the difficulty of explaining how a will-to-live can deny itself. Boehme's dualism avoids this predicament. For him there are always two wills, the own-will and the resigned-will; each needs the other, but one may become manifest and the other hidden. Boehme and Schopenhauer can both say, "the world is the crucified Savior or the crucified thief according as it resolves," [4] but Schopenhauer could not see beyond the crucifixion.

In our first chapter a distinction was made between a "this-world" immanent ethic and an "other-world" transcendent ethic. We are now prepared to understand and evaluate these two types in the light of Boehme's philosophy.

The "this-world ethic" is obviously the ethic of the soul "imagining into" the lower or dark ternary. It is an ethic derived from physical nature as seen from the outside. Here the soul takes on the forms and colors of nature. It is a nature-will, that is an egoistic will or a will to life. It has a this-world end. It is combative and attains its ends by struggle. Force meets force, and the more one force asserts itself the more it creates an opposite force. The self-assertive will cannot exist without an opposing will. Accordingly it never attains satisfaction. Every experience calls forth an opposite and sends the will on to something else. It is always in pain, for its yearning can never be satisfied by the particular to which its egoism inclines it. Thus it comes about that a this-world ethic derived from nature is combative, pessimistic, egoistic.

[4] Schopenhauer, *World as Will and as Idea,* III, 474. Boehme uses the same incident in S. R. 11:47-48.

Boehme does not deny the inescapable logic of a this-world ethic, but he asks the soul to face the other way and see what happens. Like the negative mystics he asks us to flee the evil world and retreat to the Absolute, but unlike them he asks us to return to the same world with the Absolute in tow. The other-world ethic is discovered in an act which transcends nature, but which is applied to nature. In the lower ethics perfection was sought by an infinite process in time; in the higher ethics perfection exists already as a leavening power in this world. It is not one force among other forces. Rather, it is the whole acting upon the parts. The whole comes down into nature as a harmonizing influence and the three struggling forces of nature, contraction, expansion, and rotation, are transformed into the last three nature forms, love, expression, and eternal nature, which incarnate the living God. Nature is now in temperature, for the parts act under the influence of the whole. The plurality of this-world ends is wholly dominated by the unity of the other-world religious end. Love is the creative imagination by which the lower categories pass over into the higher.

The new ethic which transcends the law of nature is the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount. When Christ said "resist not evil" he meant "do not imagine into the lower ternary," that is, do not put your attention on evil. Do not meet one evil force with another evil force thereby making it stronger through opposition. Imagine into the higher ternary, put your attention on the good, and the evil will disappear. In this way you will bring the good to manifestation and the evil to hiddenness. Everything is double, but of two opposites, one may be hidden and the other manifest. Love is the creative imagination, which by ignoring the evil

manifests the good. "Imagination makes substance." Thus by living in the kingdom inwardly, I tend to create it outwardly. I become a channel by which the divine light streams into the dark places of the world.

That this doctrine of creative imagination applies to conscious beings, many would agree. Boehme, however, often applies it, apparently, to natural objects as well. It is not so evident that imagination has the power to produce its object in the realm of physical nature. Boehme would have agreed with his contemporary Bacon in asserting that "knowledge is power," but he would have meant it in a different sense. Subsequent events have shown that Bacon was right and Boehme wrong. Man has acquired a vast power over nature by the process Boehme repudiated and which Bacon upheld, that is, by laborious observation of external nature as it appears to us. In the *Supersensual Life,* the master, in answer to his disciple's question as to how power may be obtained over nature replies:

> If thou wouldst rule outwardly over all creatures, so art thou with thy will and ruling in a bestial form, and standest only in an external and transitory dominion. But, if thou wouldst forsake this external way so thou standest in the super-sensuality and rulest over all creatures, in the ground out of which they are created and nothing on earth may harm thee for thou art like all things and nothing is unlike thee. (*Supersensual Life,* 8.)

Few to-day would agree with this, especially if it is intended to apply to physical nature. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Boehme's doctrine can be justified. According to his voluntaristic philosophy "imagination makes substance" even in nature. The world, as we know it, is created as well as received, for in all knowledge there is both an active and a passive element. As we have already shown, man by uniting with God's will creates as God creates, through the power of will and imagination.

The ethical significance of this doctrine as applied to nature may become clearer if we return for a moment to the application which was made in an earlier chapter of the theory of the seven forms to the evolution of organic life from inorganic nature. Here we depart from Boehme's usual illustrations, but not very far, it is hoped, from his meaning. Suppose, in a swarm of molecules, each molecule is following an independent course and acting upon its fellows through external forces only. The result is confusion, the dark world, the first three forms of nature. Each molecule assumes, as it were, an external relationship to its neighbors. Then let each part "imagine into" the whole and the influence of the whole descend into the warring parts. The result is life, the light world, a new form of relatedness. External mechanical compulsion of each molecule by the other is replaced by the influence of the whole organism from within. In the light world of harmonious organic life no part attempts by force to assert its egoism and control another part externally for its own interest. There is, instead, a reciprocal dependence of whole and part, each part working on the others through the inner influence of the whole. It is, perhaps, more than a figure of speech to say that the organism results from a creative imagination of the parts which at once forms and submits to the whole. Life arises when each part trusts the loyalty of every other part and creates that loyalty by its trust.

The scientist who views the organism from without through his microscope sees it in the dark world. He sees each part operate on every other part through rigid mechanical laws. No instrument which he can construct can detect or measure the influence of the parts on the whole or the whole on the parts. Each part seems to go on its egoistic way controlled by the law of its own being. The scientist

cannot find that a molecule of a certain chemical element in an organic body is in any way different from the same molecule outside of the body. But the scientist through a knowledge of his own life can enter into mystic union with the life he studies and view it as operating, not through mechanical force, but through love. This higher knowledge is the creative imagination which produces the light world. Through it the scientist can understand how each part submits to the invisible non-mechanical spirit of the whole; how, actuated by love from within, it surrenders its egoism and thus creates the larger life in which it shares. Similarly the scientist may view a molecule of my brain from without and thus see it helplessly moved about by external forces. Or he may, by mystic union with my soul, view it from within as the partial incarnation of an idea functioning in a larger whole. Just so the mystic may come into union with the inner life of the universe and find each part functioning in the whole divine plan.

Such an interpretation may take us further than Boehme's thought goes, but his language and figures of speech indicate his belief that life is created as well as observed by this inner knowledge. In the flash of light in the fourth nature form, the warring parts are harmonized by the One Will and a higher life emerges. It is the faith of each part in the others operating through the whole which produces life, just as, in a group of men, it is the faith of each in the other which creates the social organism. Life emerges to higher levels through the creative love of the individual wills for the invisible One Will.

In thus emphasizing the creative aspect of the will, it must not be forgotten that will is passive also. It requires both the "own will" and the "resigned will" to create. The

resigned will retreats to an empty whole which longs for content. The "own will" seeks the jarring particulars which long for peace and harmony. Life evolves to a higher stage when these two come together. In the flash of light in the fourth nature form the painful particulars of nature meet the empty joy of universal spirit and Primal Unity is once more incarnate.

Boehme's theory regarding the manifestation or objectification of the light world through the power of creative imagination receives its most striking confirmation as applied to human relations. In man the light and dark worlds struggle for supremacy. One is always manifest, the other hidden. Man brings the light world into manifestation in himself by placing his imagination or attention on it. Added to this is the extraordinary fact that he can do this also for other men. Experience shows that if we treat a man as a natural object he will tend to behave as such, if we treat him as one in whom the Divine love-will is manifesting itself, he will tend to live up to expectations of him. Here Boehme's doctrine of the twofold character of the will as both active and passive and the corresponding twofold character of existence as externally physical and internally spiritual reveals its fundamentally ethical character. The will to know finds itself in its object. Let us take a purely scientific view of man as a swarm of molecules or a bundle of reflexes, or a cog in an industrial machine. As such, he is so much matter, externally controlled. If he becomes a nuisance to society he should be abolished like any other physical evil, such as flood or famine. This is the relative ethic of the dark world which teaches force for force, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It puts the attention on the beginning, not the end of the evolutionary process.

Lucifer sinned in that he placed his imagination on physical origins, not on spiritual goals. In this respect he is like any man who treats another as a natural object.

But let us place our attention on the light world in our fellow man, that is on the goal, not the origin of the vital sevenfold evolutionary process in him. Here we move him not externally by force or reason but internally by love. We see him as in the depths of his soul he conceives himself to be, not a physical object of relative value, but a spiritual object of absolute and infinite value. He rises to our ideal. Faith creates its object. What is impossible to reason is possible to experience. A new being is evolved out of the warring nature forces by the power of creative imagination. This result cannot be guaranteed. To guarantee it would be to rationalize it. To accomplish it we must pass through the fourth nature form and, in an act of utter resignation, crucify self-will. Then, coming to our fellow man through the Absolute Will where all selfhood and particularity is eliminated, we are prepared to endure with joy whatever the consequences of our irrational act of faith may be. In the dark world God is angry and treats man justly according to reason. In the light world he goes beyond justice through love.

Boehme's devil is not like Milton's, a mighty prince. His strength is appearance, for all knowledge is appearance in the dark world. The solution is not to fight him but to ignore him. Opposition gives him the only strength he has. But as evil appears strong, though it is really weak, love appears weak though it is really strong. "Love," says Boehme, "surrenders to anger that it may become love. But if anger separates from love and goes into its own service, love does not hinder it, otherwise God would be at odds with himself." (Th. F. 9:5.) But the cross is the symbol of victory and

a lamb the symbol of power. If love is manifest and force hidden, then force is the matter of love and so, while outwardly weak, love is inwardly strong. Thus love is "inwardly powerful, outwardly formal." (Supers. L. 27.) Accordingly Boehme can say, "As heaven rules the world and as eternity rules time so ought Love to rule the natural life." (Supers. L. 24:25.)

> The virtue of Love is the Nothing, but its power is through all things. Its height is as high as God and its greatness is greater than God. He who finds it finds nothing and all things. (Supers. L. 26.) . . . It is greater than God for where God dwells not, love goes in. If there is anguish God is not the anguish, but his love is in it and leads thee out of anguish into God. God may seem hidden in thee, yet his love is there to bring Him to manifestation in thee. (Supers. L. 26, 27.)

Boehme's writings are permeated with a deep sense of the organic solidarity of humanity. This he expresses in the frequently occurring figure of a tree with many branches. We are all twigs of one tree. (Ep. 56:3.) No twig must say, "I am the tree." (Apol. I, 74.) In the concluding paragraph of his introduction to the "Six Points" he uses the following comparison:

> . . . As a fair flower grows out of the rough earth, which is not like the earth, but declares by its beauty the power of the earth, and how it is mixed of good and evil; so also is every man, who, out of the animal, wild, earthly nature and quality, is born again so as to become the right image of God.
>
> We have written this book for those who are a growth of such a kind, and are shooting forth into the fair lily in the kingdom of God, and are in the process of birth, that they should strengthen their essence therein, bud in the life of God, and grow and bear fruit in the tree of paradise. And seeing all the children of God grow in this tree, and each is a twig of this same tree, we have wished to impart to our twigs and fellow-branches in our tree, in which we all are, and from which we all grow, our sap, savour and essence, that our tree of paradise may become great, and that we may rejoice one with another. And we would urge all children,

who are thus growing in this tree, friendly to ponder that each branch and twig helps to shelter the other from the storm, and we commend ourselves unto their love and growth.

Such a mystical ethic, however much it may talk about self-renunciation, is not a flight from the world. It is dedication to a God who in this present world seeks to become incarnate in men that they may become creative centers for transforming darkness into light.

For this reason Boehme opposes war, for war is justified only on the lower level of existence. "All war," he says, "arises out of the nature of the dark world. Pride, envy, covetousness and anger are the four elements of darkness out of which war comes." (M. M. 38:7.) "No Christian warreth." (M. M. 38:15.) "No soldier shall inherit the kingdom of God while he is a soldier." (M. M. 33:24.) In Boehme's commentary on Genesis he is confronted with the fact that God frequently ordered the Israelites to fight. His philosophy, however, is well designed to explain this. It was Jehovah, the dark savage nature Deity, the God of anger who commanded war, not God the Son as He is to an imagination centered in the light of His love.

For although God bade the people of Israel to drive out the heathen and wage war yet the command was wholly from the angry God that is the property of fire. The heathen stirred up the anger which destroyed them. God so far as he is called God, desires no war, yea he cannot desire anything evil or destructive for, according to the second or light principle, he is only good and giving, and giveth himself to all things. (M. M. 38:8.)

Boehme has little confidence in Moses as an interpreter of Deity.

What need hath the Lord of a hunter such as Moses says that Nimrod was, a mighty hunter before the Lord. Moses has a veil before his shining eyes. He who hunts before the Lord of all creatures, does not hunt hares and other beasts. (M. M. 35:32.)

Boehme's sensitive soul suffered much from the religious wars of his time and he has no words too strong for the militaristic clergyman. "How can he serve Christ," he says, "who holds in one hand the cup of Christ and in the other the sword of revenge." (M. M. 62:30.)

Hearken all ye who call yourselves apostles of Christ. Hath Christ sent you to fight and make war. When he gave you the sword of the spirit did he command you that. Are you not rather apostles of God's anger. (M. M. 62:25.)

In his pacifism he does not go so far as Tolstoi. The following passage summarizes his attitude and his reasons for it:

Thou shouldst be a leader into the kingdom of God, and enkindle thy brother with thy love and meekness, that he may see in thee God's essence as in a mirror, and thus in thee take hold also with his imagination. Doest thou this, then bringest thou thy soul, thy work, likewise thy neighbour or brother into God's kingdom, and enlargest the kingdom of heaven with its manifestations. This has Christ taught us, saying: "If any smite thee on one cheek, offer him the other also; if any take away thy cloak, withhold not from him thy coat also" (Matt. 5:39, 40); that he may have in thee a mirror and retreat into himself, see thy meekness, acknowledge thou art God's child, and that God's Spirit leads thee; that he may learn of thee, descend into himself and seek himself. Else, if thou oppose him with defiance and spite, his spite becomes kindled still more, and at last he thinks he is acting right to thee. But thus he must certainly recognize he doth thee wrong.

And as God's love resists all wicked men, and the conscience often dissuades from evil, so also thy meekness and patience go to his bad conscience and arraign the conscience in itself before God's light in the wrath. In this way many a wicked man goes out from his wickedness, descends into himself and seeks himself. Then God's Spirit puts him in mind of thy patience, and sets it before his eyes, and so he is drawn thereby into repentance and abstinence.

Not that one should not defend oneself against a murderer or thief, who would murder and steal. But where one sees that any is eager upon unrighteousness, one should set his fault openly with a good light before his eyes, and freely and of good-will offer him

the richly-loving Christian heart; that he may find actually and in fact, that it is done out of love-zeal to God, and that love and God's will are more to that man than the earthly nature, and that he purposely will not consent to anything passionate or evil being done; that he may see that the children of God do love more the love of God and do cleave to it more than to any temporal good; and that God's children are not at home in this world, but only pilgrims, who gladly relinquish everything of this world so that they may but inherit the kingdom of heaven. (S. P. 4:25-27.) (Earle's translation.)

To our modern scientific materialism and to our overwhelming faith in the supreme value of our rapidly developing conquest of nature, the ethic of Jacob Boehme speaks in no uncertain terms. Mighty and all important as science is, Boehme consigns it to the world of darkness if unfulfilled by that mystic knowledge which pierces through the mechanistic shell to the life beneath. There are two systems of categories through which we can approach our world, one set is rational and scientific, the other is ethical and mystical. These are Boehme's dark and light worlds and each is a nothing, he says, to the other. If we rationalize our world, ethics disappears, for good and evil become relative. If we construct our world according to ethics, science disappears for it cannot recognize freedom. Yet ethics and science need each other, for without ethics science would have no goal, and without science ethics would evaporate as a mere form without content. "Each without the other would be an *Ungrund.*" The only way out is to give up our ambition to reduce all things to a single system and recognize Boehme's fundamental dualism as irreducible. But it is a dualism to be perpetually overcome, though never abolished. Darkness must be in continual process of being subordinated to light. To derive

our ideals out of an objective study of nature is to face the wrong way and make an end out of what should be a means. Looking into nature we find man the passive instrument of vast cosmic forces that are wholly indifferent to his fate. He is a mechanism and his will is a delusion. Boehme exhorts us as mystics to face toward the light. If we follow his injunction, will becomes the supreme reality and nature the passive instrument. Man finds to his surprise that, while theoretically he is helpless, practically he can lord it over nature. On the wings of will and imagination he can pierce through the sense world to the Life beneath. We must therefore be both scientists and mystics if we would know both truth and life.

It has often been said that the mechanization of human beings due to our industrial system and such calamities as the great war and other evils of our modern time are due to the fact that we have developed scientifically more rapidly than we have progressed ethically. Boehme would explain that we have "imagined into" the lower ternary. Our ideals have been derived from nature, not spirit, from the means and not from the end. In our intoxication with our remarkable material progress, we have become slaves of nature. We have worshiped the tool and made it an end in itself. The infinite worth of human life has been forgotten and subordinated to material achievement.

To discover and maintain the true relation between nature and spirit is no easy task as Boehme discovered in the unceasing travail of his soul. It cannot be said that his philosophy fully succeeds and yet, paradoxically, it is the very heart of that philosophy, that philosophy alone cannot solve our problem. Not only as a thinker, but also as a prophet he asks us to make a venture of faith.

CHAPTER VIII

RECAPITULATION OF BOEHME'S EVOLUTIONARY CYCLES

Our cosmic drama is now complete. It is at once the biography of God; a philosophy of nature and the history of man.[1]

Let us briefly outline the whole scheme of existence according to the interpretation which has been given of the final phase of Boehme's philosophy.

(1) The basis of all phenomenal existence is a threefold will which is a circular process turned back on itself. It is an indeterminate will or blind energy (the Father), a will rendered more determinate by being reflexed on itself (the Son), and a Spirit which creates through the interaction of the two.

(2) The result of this first creative movement is a Divine plan of creation, or the Divine imagination. It is personified as Wisdom or the Virgin Sophia. Here at the beginning as always, life and knowledge result from a union of subjective and objective elements. In its first reflexive movement the will is its own object. The in-going will discovers as its object a certain inherent structure or "Wisdom" in the out-going will which determines action. In the dim self-knowledge which results from this discovery there arises a

[1] "The ancient world takes its stand on the drama of the universe, the modern on the inward drama of the soul." Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. Boehme being a philosopher of the transition identified the two.

more definite plan of action or abstract model of creation which is an ideal harmony of empty forms. This again receives the name of "Wisdom."

(3) The will can attain no true self-consciousness by having itself as an object. It must be reflected in a mirror independent of itself. Accordingly there arises within it a painful desire for genuine objective self-knowledge. This desire is the first form of nature and manifests itself as "attraction." It exists only through an opposing force which is "expansion." The interaction of the two produces rotation, the multitude of circular processes which make up physical nature. These three constitute the Trinity on its lowest physical level. Hence the creation of physical nature materializes or externalizes the original threefold will. Attraction is the in-going will. Expansion is the out-going will, and physical nature is the interaction of the two. This descent into matter or particularity is symbolized as the "Fall of Lucifer."

(4) As these forces are independent of the original ideal harmony and of each other, conflict and confusion arise. The intensity of the conflict finally subdues the harshness of nature and there is a new reflexion of the will on itself. In the fourth nature form there is a retreat to the Absolute Will which reconciles the jarring discordant particulars through the harmonizing influence of the abstract ideal Wisdom of God. In theological terms God is crucified on the cross of nature in order to experience resurrecton in the Heaven of a higher life. In physical terms the friction of opposing forces generates a spark of light which is nature's knowledge of itself. In human terms the discordant forces in man's soul are harmonized through an act of self-renunciation by which his will is identified with the original absolute

will. In every case self-knowledge and rebirth to a better life come about through opposition and reconciliation in a higher unity.

(5) When the first three nature forms unite with the Absolute Will in the fourth nature form, they are internally harmonized and vitalized and then become the last three forms. The first three remain however as the unmanifested material substratum of the last three. When whole and part are thus adjusted to each other in an organic union the seven forms comprise Eternal Nature, the final objectification of the original threefold will in a completely self-conscious life. This Divine Life is known internally through mystic union with it (*Verstand*), not through outward rational knowledge. In such union the human will creates as God creates, in perfect freedom through the power of creative imagination.

(6) This internal view of nature as the life of the threefold will is succeeded by an external view (*Vernunft*). Now the will sees only the empty abstract image of what it may become. As so observed Eternal Nature [2] is the mirror of divine Wisdom, a new plan of creation. The whole cycle of changes is now repeated in the next creative act. The life of God, says Boehme, is a "continuous hunger and satiating." (T. F. L. 4:7.)

This, in brief, is the plot of our cosmic drama. Each step is connected with every other by a living logic. And here again Boehme's warning must be repeated. We have described as in time and as a sequence connected by the law of cause and effect what is in reality an interrelated eternal process, wherein each part is both cause and effect to every other part.

[2] Temporal Nature is, however, only a distorted and imperfect mirror of the Spirit.

Whatever degree of truth this account may have in its application to God and nature, it clearly exhibits keen insight into human experience. "As God's eternal beginningless manner of birth is," says Boehme, "so is also the springing up of human life." (A. 26:54.) The single subject of our discourse has been this upspringing of all life to higher levels. The Ideal Trinity, the Divine Wisdom, and the seven fountain-spirits form a series of mystical cycles, a chain which like the ladder of another Jacob, reaches up from earth to heaven. The famous three rungs in the ladders of earlier mystics, purification, enlightenment, and union, seem simple in comparison with Boehme's minute scientific analysis of his cycles within cycles. We have characterized his evolutionary process as a theogony and a cosmogony. Let us now review it briefly as the rebirth of the human soul, not only through religious experience of God, but through contact with the life of all things in every movement of the will.

The following is one of innumerable passages which, though intended to apply to nature is obviously autobiographical:

> The will finds nothing, but only a hunger which it is itself, which draws it into itself; that is, it draws itself into itself and finds itself in itself, and its attraction (the first form) into itself makes in it an over-shading or darkness. . . . That the will with its desire is in darkness is its contrariety and it conceives in itself another will to go out from the darkness again into the freedom and yet it cannot reach the freedom outside of itself for the desire to go out of itself causes pain and darkness . . . Thus the sting (the second form) would go out of itself and cannot for the desire holds it and so it stands like a triangle and cross wheel, which, because it cannot move becomes quivering, whence arises the mixture, that is, the essences, or plurality of desires, for the turning makes a continual confusion and tearing whence the third form, anguish, as pain arises. (S. R. 2:7-9.)

This is the description of a soul in torment, torn between two contending desires. There is the in-going will which creates darkness and the out-going will which attempts to break through that darkness. Boehme saw the in-going will in nature as attraction and the out-going as expansion. These are the first two forms of nature. They are also the first two forms of the soul in its knowledge of nature. They symbolize the dilemma of the mystic seeking inwardly for God in the dark depths of his soul and outwardly for knowledge of Him as He is revealed in nature. In nature as in man, the result of this double search is tension or anguish, in fact the third of the seven mystic forms.

> In the fire-soul there is a wheel like a madness and the soul's form stands in a mad furious wheel which confounds the body and breaks in pieces the understanding. (M. M. 26:62.)

The struggle of nature is matched by the struggle of the mystic who endeavors to reconcile the God demanded by his inner life with the God of the outer world. A negative mystic will flee from the world to find God in the supersensible. A positive mystic struggles to find Him also within the world of sense.

How can the mystic go in opposite directions and reach the same God? In hunger for life, physical nature whirls in hopeless circles torn by the contention of attraction and diffusion. Similarly man's hunger for God and knowledge drives him as restlessly outward and inward, torn as he is by the tension of centrifugal and centripetal wills. Nature's dilemma is due to particularity. Each force goes on its independent way regardless of the others. Man's problem, likewise, arises from egoism. The in-going and out-going wills both seek to satisfy *themselves,* that is, they seek a sub-

jective rational good relative to painful desire not an objective good in itself which is independent of desire.

The solution is resignation in which all desire and egoism is wholly surrendered and the will retreats to the Absolute whence it came. Here it finds the original unity in which its divided self is harmonized.

> All that pains thee is only thy self-hood, for thou art at enmity with thyself. Would'st thou now wholly forsake thy own desire, which has introduced itself into a strange substance, and become in self-hood and in own-desire as a nothing, so that thou dost no more will or desire for thyself, but wholly and fully introduce thy desire again with resignation into the eternal, to wit, into God's will, that the same will may be thy will and desire. (S. R. 15:8-9.)

In nature the conflict of forces generates the "fire of life" which consumes particularity, and the whole, the Eternal Freedom, is present in the light of the fire as harmonizing love. Thus life and knowledge are born in nature through an intensifying of contrasts which results in an organic synthesis. In man the conflict of the two wills generates the light of knowledge, for knowledge can only exist if it is born of both subjective and objective elements. The light of knowledge which is kindled in the fourth form is compounded of the many and the one. The many arise from dark nature, the object of the out-going will and the one is the absolute whole, the object of the in-going will.

Baptized in the Eternal Freedom of the Absolute Will the two contending wills arise harmonized and a new knowledge is born. Now each contributes its share to the higher life. The active nature-will contributes force, energy, ambition. The passive spirit-will contributes value, relationship and a sense of the inner life and unity of all things. The first strikes out toward the particular, the second harks back to

the universal. The first aims at the external and seeks to bring it into subjection, the second makes the internal its objective, and seeks to understand it. The first knows a this-world ethic founded on struggle and a variety of ends; the second knows an other-world ethic founded on self-denial and a single end. Separated, the two produce confusion and the darkness of external knowledge. Harmonized they form Divine Life, which is a coördinated and integrated personality. The mystic reborn into the light world no longer knows nature simply as an external procession of empty forms, but he knows a nature that is pregnant with life and purpose holding latent within it the Kingdom of Heaven.

Such rebirth from nature to spirit resembles the procedure of a mathematician plotting the tangent curve. Finding that the curve mounts upward more and more sharply as it approaches its asymptote and wearying of ever reaching an end he makes a mystical leap through the point infinity (or zero) and discovers his curve coming up from below on the other side of the asymptote. Just so Boehme struggles for knowledge of nature and, finding that he is engaged in an infinite task, he sinks down into the Absolute and comes up to nature from the other side. He envisions the curve of existence, not as an indefinite and fragmentary figure, but as a completed cycle returning upon itself.

At this point the peculiar characteristic of Boehme's mysticism, which permits us to call it Voluntaristic, becomes evident. In every vision of God the soul must go through the whole theogonistic process from zero to infinity and back. The mystic vision is a process, rather than an ecstatic contemplation. At the bottom is the empty subjective will. At the top is the fully realized objectified will, the Kingdom

of Heaven. Between the two is our temporal world in which the Kingdom is latent, but not yet realized. The mystic in imitating God and going from bottom to top and back must constantly pass through this temporal world. By so doing, he brings the Kingdom nearer in each successive passage. Without a vision of the All, he would be blind and unaware of his goal; without a knowledge of the discordant particulars of nature the All would be empty and meaningless. His procedure is both inductive and deductive. He becomes cognizant of the part through the whole and the whole through the part.

Thus Boehme's mystic ladder does not reach straight up into heaven. The pilgrims' progress of the soul, like the creative process, proceeds in ascending and descending curves. In the creative process God abandons his ideal abstract goodness, and permits an independent will which manifests itself as matter. He seeks self-knowledge, but He cannot know Himself without knowing something other than Himself. There can be no real knowledge without an independent object. Also, there can be no real value without a real dualism of good and evil. "How can God love," says Boehme, "without something to love?" In his first ideal state, God is a solipsist and his goodness is unreal. Accordingly, through the first three forms, He creates an independent world which may and does turn against Him. Even God does not see beyond the darkness of complete self-renunciation. After much suffering, He harmonizes the independent particulars through His sacrificial love and so wins His world back. He then finds the original empty forms of His imagination have become the realities of Eternal Nature for they hold hidden within them an opposition which has been overcome.

The mystic must, like God, be earth-bound as well as heaven-bound. He unites with the will of God and beholds God's Wisdom, the great plan of the Kingdom of Heaven that is to be. But he cannot remain there where his own individuality is lost and his goodness is abstract and unreal. Real goodness contains an opposition which has been overcome. As God incarnates His dream in the flesh of His Son, so the mystic must create his vision in material form on the earth.

The mystic is like an artist who has caught a vision of perfect beauty. The artist is not satisfied with a transitory dream, he wishes to embody it in matter which is independent of himself in order that it may be an object of genuine sacrificial love. Accordingly he must submit to limitations due to the nature of substance and fix his attention on the particular. Through a self-assertive act of the will he comes from his vision down into nature and splits up the one primordial beauty into many imperfect embodiments. Even by this he cannot win complete satisfaction. His will flies back and forth; out into nature and back into himself, but the forms he creates are all inferior to his vision. They express too much of his own egoism. The vision came out of the Absolute and to the Absolute the artist must again retreat in order to renew it.

> The own will forms itself according to its innate nature, but the resigned will forms itself according to the model in eternity, as it was conceived in the mirror of the eternal wisdom of God before world began. For whatever takes place in self-hood forms itself, but that which resigns itself freely is fashioned of free will. (S. R. 15:49.)

The artist returns to the "model in eternity" receives new inspiration and comes back to earth better able to incarnate his vision. Thus he goes back on the "resigned will" and

forward on the "own will"; each time bringing earth closer to heaven and heaven closer to earth.

God must become Man, man must become God, Heaven must be one with the earth and the earth must become Heaven. Wouldst thou make heaven out of the earth, then give the earth the food of heaven. (S. R. 10:48.)

Thus the "process of Christ," to use Boehme's phrase, consists in setting apart an independent other and then winning it back again revitalized with a new value. Boehme knew this as the creative process in man. It was the only creative process that he or anyone else could know directly. Little wonder then that he thought it also the creative process in the universe.

Thus the mystic cycle is a constant intersection of heaven and hell in order that this world may be gradually redeemed. The spiritual life is a continual struggle "wherein is such a contest as no wicked man feels, but only those who have put on Christ." (Ep. 13:15.) That Boehme always thinks of the new-birth not as a single event, but as a gradual growth, is illustrated by his frequent comparison of it to the growth of the lily-twig sprouting up out of dark matter into the sunlight of the kingdom.

When we find that our desire is set entirely upon God . . . so that the imagination draws on God's Power then the noble lily-twig is born. (Inc. II, 10:3.) The lily-twig is at first small as a grain of mustard seed and then becomes great as a laurel-tree, that is the true new birth in Christ. (Apol. I, 297.) If we have struggled many times for the garland and have remained steadfast until the twig becomes a little tree then it will not easily be broken in the storm. (Inc. I, 13:11.) A lily blossoms upon the mountains and valleys in all the ends of the earth: He that seeketh findeth. Amen. (S. R. 16:48.)

The laws of the evolutionary process which have been briefly summarized, govern the birth of the cosmos out of

chaos, the long course of human history and the regeneration of the soul. One more important field in which they operate remains to be discussed. In every free movement of the human will the whole series of changes which we have just outlined takes place.

I shall attempt to show, by means of a diagram, how this latter statement applies. This diagram is intended as an aid to imagination, not as a picture of structural characteristics of the human nervous system, nor of any possible arrangement of psychic entities in space. It serves the same purpose as a diagram drawn by a physicist to represent a magnetic field or to suggest the structure of an atom. It does not pretend to be a picture of reality, but it may serve as an aid to thought.[3] Only certain very limited aspects of a complicated situation can be represented by such a figure.

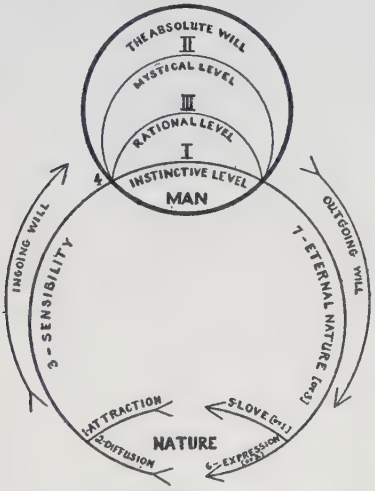
The heavy circle represents man. The arcs labeled I, II, and III are Boehme's "Three Principles" or "Threefold Life of Man." The numbers 1 to 7 indicate the seven forms of nature.

Boehme's word *Principium* which is usually rendered "principle" in English translations of his works retains for him its original meaning of "source," "origin," or "beginning." [4] He identifies it with *Anfang*. Man can imagine into (center his attention on) any one of three "principles" or springs of action. These are three "births" of three different types of life. We shall call them three levels of experience. In them man experiences the threefold will of the Deity antecedent to nature which has been called the

[3] The use of such diagrams is a weakness of other writers on Boehme. Blake compared those in the "Law edition" to the works of Michael Angelo, probably referring to their subject matter rather than their artistic quality.

[4] "In this consideration you may understand what I mean by Principium, for a principium is nothing else than a new birth, a new life." (T. P. 5:6.)

"Ideal Trinity." The will may discharge in action through any one of the three levels, though no act is possible which does not contain something of all three. One is always dominant and the others "hidden." The discharge of the will through I manifests the dark world or first three nature forms; through II, the light world or last three nature forms, and through III the temporal or mixed world. Sometimes



The Three Principles and the Seven Forms of Nature considered as components of a complete movement of the threefold will.

Boehme applies the word *principium* to the manifestation in nature, as well as to the will which is manifested.

I, the dark "source" or Father, is the level of inner experience which we would call to-day "instinctive." Boehme calls it "animal or vegetative." Here man behaves as a natural object and responds mechanically to the stimuli of sense. His knowledge is wholly external. In religious

experience, at this level, man uncritically accepts the historical, the institutional and the authoritative. The ethic of the dark world is a mechanical ethic of external force. Self-interest alone prevails as man cannot see beyond the desire of the moment. This level is hell, the first three nature forms, the abode of devils who do not know evil from good.

II is the bright source, the will of the Son. Here the first three nature forms enter, pass through the Absolute point of view and emerge as the last three forms. Man creates Eternal Nature in exactly the same way that God creates it as previously outlined. Through level II man's will and God's will become identical and create in unison. Man follows the in-going will of the primordial Trinity antecedent to nature and beholds, as it does, the Wisdom of God, the plan of the world, which is the inherent subjective structure of the Absolute Will. Having seen these abstract possibilities dimly outlined in the background of existence, man goes out into the dark world of nature to overcome it and incarnate his vision in the flesh. Thus the Son is born of the Virgin Wisdom, crucified on the cross of nature, and raised up into the higher life. The new creative will is free, for it goes forth from the background of the primordial freedom of the Absolute. It has renounced all self-interest and so has found an absolute objective good which is not relative to its painful desire. Its interest is now the interest of the whole. The ethic it has discovered is the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount which is beyond rational and relative justice and external law. Action is now motivated only by love of life as a whole. In discharging through II the will brings the interests of the whole to bear upon the frag-

mentary and particular. The first three forms of nature which are the basis of particularity and individuality are not abolished. They pass through the Absolute and form the hidden material basis of the new act. Thus the new act is the manifestation of a higher form of organic life in which the whole and parts reach a more harmonious degree of interdependence. This level is the innermost core of man. Here the incommunicable element is at a maximum. To this point science cannot explore for it does not recognize an irrational freedom nor an inner absolute will. We are aware of it only as the profound unplumbed background of feeling which to some degree comes into every free act of the will. Though always present, it is not, however, always dominant in action. Only when the will is "centered" on it does it give birth to the light world. The religion of II is mysticism.

III is called by Boehme the "rational" source. Here the term "rational" must be understood in Boehme's peculiar sense. I and II may be considered as the lower and upper asymptotic limits of experience and III as any intermediate stage. I and II are "eternal" but III is in time and is peculiar to this present world which will some day pass away. In Eternal Nature I and II are perfectly harmonized in a timeless circular process, but with man, this state is only occasionally possible. "Reason" contains something of the infinite All and something of the unharmonized parts. She cannot harmonize I and II completely, but she contains enough of II to make her dissatisfied with herself and eventually to bring about her salvation. III is the twilight zone of our present-day life where Eternal Nature is seen as out of joint. Here light and darkness, life and mechanism

struggle for supremacy. Only by self-surrender can Reason obtain a vision of the higher life which will save her. Evolution in III proceeds by the gradual and progressive harmonization of I and II.

The religion peculiar to III is theology which is a partial harmonization of God and nature. Religious rationalism endeavors without complete success to reconcile elements of the mysticism of II and the institutionalism of I.

III can be compared to the visible part of the spectrum of which II is the ultraviolet and I the infrared. I and II are at the limits of introspection. They affect us profoundly though they can never be examined directly.

The seven forms of nature fit easily into this scheme. Beginning with nature as revealed to our senses, we find it composed of a series of contrasts generated by the opposition of the first two nature forms, attraction and diffusion. These contrasts are each a "Stachel der Empfindlichkeit" (T. F. L. 2:13) or "sting of sensibility" which gives rise to sensation. Boehme frequently refers to the third nature form, which combines the first and second, as "Sinnlichkeit" or sensibility It is the world as revealed to our senses. Here we are close to modern psychology which maintains that sensation arises only through contrasts which are great enough to be above a certain threshold.

Boehme holds that the contrast of attraction and diffusion is the first primitive operation of the out-going and in-going wills. An interpretation of this doctrine might be made as follows: We become aware of a contrast because our attention goes both forward and backward across it. Thus, in going from black to white, the will is out-going to find the white and in-going to compare it with the memory of the black. Unless the will goes in both directions it knows

neither white nor black for each is known only as compared to the other. The world, as known, is the joint result of the out-going will to discover the new and the in-going will to interpret the new in terms of the old.

The world thus presents itself to us in the third nature form as a confusion of contrasts of sufficient intensity to arouse our consciousness and our will to bring harmony and order. The soul stands at 4, the fourth nature form, where light and darkness divide. The will discharges on all three paths, but one is dominant. Let us consider only I and II, the two extremes. If the first principle is dominant, the action is based on the sensual and mechanical and the will returns to the same three nature forms from whence it came. The will which discharges through II is in union with the one will which unites all nature from within. It brings the whole down into the parts just as it first brought the parts up into the whole. Thus, through II the will returns to nature, as it were from the inside with an absolute point of view. It is then in living union with nature. It reconciles warring material forces and so generates the higher life. Such action is based not only on freedom, but on a sympathetic feeling of harmony with all creation. The first three forms are transfigured into the last three and the whole cycle is eternally repeated in an ever ascending chain toward heaven which gradually draws the kingdom of this world up into the Kingdom of Light.

In my historical introduction to Boehme's philosophy six types of thought which preceded him were briefly outlined in order to show, by way of contrast, the peculiar problem of Protestant mysticism. The early Protestant mystic, being both mediæval and modern, sought to retain the absolute values discovered by an other world attitude and apply them

to the transformation of this present relative world. Boehme solved the problem through a careful analysis of the course of the will as it first rose from out the dark relative world, passed through the absolute and returned with absolute whole and relative particular harmonized in a higher organic life. The diagram depicting the path of the will represents probably the greatest possible simplification of the living elements in Boehme's philosophy. It neglects much that is dead. It will be useful to see how the other systems of thought outlined in the introduction fit into this scheme. As the diagram oversimplifies Boehme's conceptions so also will it oversimplify the others.

(1) Greek Idealism is centered in III. There is a consequent apotheosis of the intellectual realm as ultimate reality. The out-going will, finding no satisfying object, is turned back on itself as is the case in Boehme's Ideal Trinity. It gets no further than the Divine Wisdom which is a plan of action, not action itself. There is accordingly an arrest of discharge into nature. Greek philosophy made no significant attempt to reform the world in the light of the Ideas. Rationalism can discover no real independent evil and ethics therefore vanish.

(2) Neo-Platonism and Catholic mysticism penetrate deeper than Greek Idealism and reach level II. There is a consequent apotheosis of the mystical realm as ultimate reality. Little ethical discharge takes place into nature as the emphasis is on the in-going path. The out-going is ignored. There is a further flight from the world than in Greek Idealism.

(3) Early Christianity was not a consistent system of thought and is accordingly difficult to classify. It penetrated to II at times, but believed that the Divine had come down

into this world only in one instance, that of the Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." (John 1:14.) At some time in the future, through a supernatural event, the Absolute realm would descend into nature. Such mystics, however, as Paul and the early church Fathers believed in a discharge through II in every human life which was in mystic union with Christ.

(4) Catholicism provided for discharge through II in channels furnished by the church, and through III and I in the ordinary affairs of life. There was no attempt to harmonize I, II and III.

(5) Orthodox Protestantism faced toward II, but did not enter it. It possessed a theology in III. Man's soul, it held, was wholly "natural" and accordingly was centered entirely in I. There was no bridge to II. By faith the soul was oriented toward the eternal and so entered II after death.

(6) Protestant mysticism holds that the soul can be centered in II in this life and that discharge through it is a normal process. It accordingly undertakes to apply an absolute ethic to this present imperfect world. The Quakers, for example, who are to-day the chief exponents of Protestant mysticism, interpret the Sermon on the Mount literally. They believe that an uncompromising attempt to live in the Kingdom of Heaven inwardly in the heart is the best means of bringing it into existence outwardly on the earth.

It would not be difficult to find serious fault with each of these brief characterizations and with the scheme of classification as a whole. Sharp distinctions are made between I, II and III, whereas they actually merge gradually into one another. Also the diagram does not show how each level plays a part in every movement of the will. It would be

just as true to fact to draw our figure so that I, III and II are three successive stages in any action. As so considered, I comes first as the given element. It is the world presented to us in our sense organs and in the structure of our physical organism. III is the middle term, the central intellectual process of mental abstraction and reflection which attempts to harmonize as far as possible the given elements with what has come before. II, the final stage before the action is completed, is the emotional and volitional background out of whose mysterious depths arises a free act of will.[5] It is not III, the "reason" (in Boehmes' sense of the word), but II, the ultimate source of our sense of value which chiefly governs the free conscious action of man. Our own figure, as drawn above, not only follows Boehme's philosophy more closely than this arrangement, but it has the merit of showing how some religious systems are centered in deeper levels than others. It is the distinguishing characteristic of that type of mysticism which we have described as voluntaristic, not only to pierce to the deepest level of human experience, but also to incarnate in the outer world what it finds there.

While discussing in quite different phraseology the process outlined above, Boehme warns us again and again that he is forced to distort it in order to describe it. The process, he says, is "eternal"; that is, every part is cause and effect to every other part, whereas it must be described as a sequence in time as if one element came first, another second and so on. We would say to-day that we are compelled to mechanize an organic system in order to give it a rational explanation. Diagrams may represent machines perfectly, but no diagram can ever show how whole and part are inter-

[5] See William James' essay *Reflex Action and Theism* for a discussion of this arrangement of the three factors. Also Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element in Religion,* I, p. 57.

related in a living organism. This can be apprehended only through experience of life itself.

In like manner no system of theology or philosophy and no external symbol can take the place of vital religious experience. This is Boehme's indictment of the Protestantism of his day. It did not pierce below the level of historic fact and written creed, and it depended on an external celestial mechanism for human salvation. Boehme offered it a philosophy based on the conception of life, and taught that man may come into living organic union with a redemptive process at the core of existence.

For three centuries Protestantism and mechanistic science have been among the principal influences in the world of western thought. Both are legalistic and emphasize external relations. The Protestant creed regulates the attitude of the worshiper to an external Deity. The Protestant form of worship operates through words, sounds and symbols. The Protestant ethic still clings largely to Old Testament legalism which prescribes an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Though the doctrine of total depravity is seldom mentioned to-day, men are still treated as natural objects in Protestant industrialism.

Similarly mechanistic science tells us only how material bodies behave in their external relations with each other. Like Protestantism it believes thoroughly in predestination and the total depravity of matter, for matter, it holds, is dead and helplessly moved about by outside forces. Mechanism ignores life and cannot find any absolute will of the whole which operates through the parts. Behaviorism or mechanistic psychology does not go deeper than level I in our figure. Protestantism and mechanistic science follow the out-going subjectively originated will which discovers only the external.

It is sometimes believed that our modern age of mechanism followed immediately upon the Platonic Idealism of the Middle Ages, but between the rule of Luther and Galileo on the one hand and Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on the other there was a mighty effort in the Renaissance to evolve a philosophy of life. This effort culminated in Jacob Boehme who inherited the traditions of Renaissance science. The Platonic objectivism of Catholicism and the Lutheran subjectivism of Protestantism find in Boehme a subjective-objectivism in a mystical union of Protestant will and Catholic Idea. Interior faith meets exterior grace in life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Protestantism speaks of the way, or the Father, Catholicism of the Truth or the Son, and Mysticism of the Holy Ghost or the life. Boehme hears the divine melody, not from a choir of Protestant angels, nor in the Gregorian chant of the Church. It is, for him, "*das Freudenspiel der ewigen Gebärung*"—"the joy-melody of the eternal generation." (S. R. 16, 3.)

Signs are multiplying to-day that the rule of mechanistic theory is beginning to weaken. The newest philposophies of science are evolving a theory of nature which declares that mechanism is a superficial aspect of existence. Protestantism, losing faith in its Book and creeds and attempting to substitute social service and business efficiency, is just beginning to discover that it must pierce to deeper levels of experience if it is to be saved. Of this new transitional epoch in religion and science the Görlitz shoemaker is a real prophet.

There is a story told by Hans Christian Andersen and translated into music by Stravinsky which is suggestive of the recent history of western man. Long ago a nightingale sang so sweetly before the Emperor of China that she was

kept at court and held in great honor. One day a packet arrived from the Emperor of Japan containing a marvelous mechanical bird whose songs were an almost perfect imitation of the songs of a living nightingale. At the first performance of this marvelous rival the real nightingale flew away. But no one cared because, as the music master said, "With a real nightingale we can never tell what is going to be sung, but with this bird everything is settled. We can open it and explain it so that people can understand exactly how the songs are made, why one particular note follows another." Finally when every one knew every little turn in the artificial bird's song a spring cracked and the music stopped. The bird was worn out and no one could mend it. Years passed and the emperor fell ill. He saw the horrible image of Death bending over him and he pleaded with the mechanical bird to charm the specter away, but the bird remained silent. Suddenly there came through the open window the sound of a sweet song. Outside on the bough of a tree sat the living nightingale. She sang of the quiet churchyard so beautifully that Death longed to go and see his garden. He floated away like a mist. The emperor recovered, but the living nightingale would come to court no more. She said, "I will sit on a bough outside your window and sing to you, for I love your heart better than your crown."

The living bird which left us three centuries ago with the advent of mechanistic science and religion has not yet come back, but her song can be faintly heard already in the distance. She will not return in the pomp and glory of the Middle Ages but she is willing to return to human hearts. The music master was right in holding that the mechanical bird is much more efficient and dependable, but the Western

world is suffering from a disease which no machine can cure. Only the wild untamed song which wells out of the mysterious depths of life can charm away the specter hovering above us.

APPENDIX

German Idealism and Boehme's Problem. The character of Boehme's problem can be better understood if we sketch a brief comparison between the situation at the beginning of the seventeenth century and the more familiar situation at the beginning of the nineteenth, though in the nature of the case such a summary cannot do full justice to the conflict of ideas at either period.

The sinner-salvation problem of Luther is, in religious terms, the subject-object problem of Kant. The Puritan asks, "How can I make my calling and election sure?" The epistemologist asks, "How can I make my knowledge sure?"

Descartes had discovered a deep chasm between mind and matter and the Leibnizian-Wolfian philosophy, finding no way to bridge it, conceived of a preëstablished harmony, grounded in God, between knower and known. In the same way the scholastics had found a kind of preëstablished harmony, grounded in God, between reason and faith, and Leibnitz, as a faithful churchman, agreed, but neither Leibnitz nor Saint Thomas could demonstrate how such a pre-established harmony could actually exist. Neither the unclouded "intuition" of Leibnitz nor the "authority" of Saint Thomas saved subject from subjectivity nor sinner from sin. Either he was left imprisoned in a monad or separated from the suprasensible by a gulf which only the miraculous, as for example, in the sacrament, could bridge.

Curiously enough, Kant and Luther "solved" the problem by making the gulf wider than ever. Luther abolished the sacraments as the bridge to heaven, and Kant demolished the ontological argument. Heaven and the noumenal world became objects, not of knowledge, but of faith, that is, they are posited by an act of will. Luther's "faith" is Kant's "practical reason."

"Faith," says Melanchthon, the philosopher of Lutheranism, "is nothing else than trust in the Divine mercy promised in Christ." Neither the "faith" of Luther nor the "regulative principles" of Kant can do more than point to a God beyond the sensible. They are promissory notes received in this world, to be cashed in the next.

"The highest good," says Kant, "is therefore practically possible only if we presuppose the immortality of the soul." [1] For both Luther and Kant the soul is condemned to eternal struggle, but it has that within it by which it wills that the struggle is justified.

It is not surprising that when the other world is pushed too far away it should disappear altogether. Successors of Kant, such as Fichte, and the Romanticists found that the world was their ego, and the extreme radicals of Luther's day declared that they were "godded with God." There were of course enormous differences between the poetic dreamers of the Romantic movement and those uncounted Reformation radicals who suffered death for the faith that was in them. In both cases, however, the loosening of the authority of the external freed some spirits from all restraint. Kant and the French Revolution were to Romanticism what Luther and the Reformation were to Anabaptism.

It is difficult to generalize about Anabaptism. "There are not two to be found who agree with each other at all points," says their contemporary Franck.[2] But this very disagreement is the significant point. It follows upon the retreat of the objective. Hans Denck, an apostle of the Anabaptists, speaks of faith that must rest on "an inner witness which God by his grace plants in the soul." The Bible is "an echo of what is being uttered deep in my own bosom." [3] Much of Anabaptism was well balanced, but it sometimes ran into extravagant forms. Crushed out of Germany by frightful persecution it fled to Holland and England. The extreme limit in the subjectivism of the Reformation is found in the English Ranters of the seventeenth century who, because God was in them, claimed God's prerogatives.[4]

In similar fashion the Romanticists of the nineteenth century claimed divine privileges. They objected to Kant's theory that a prerequisite of knowledge is something outside knowledge itself. Why not take Kant's principle of the originality and activity of spirit and make it all-sufficient? Reason has no object but itself, and the philosopher, like the poet or artist, need only examine his own spirit as it unfolds before him. Schelling's attempt to "break through to Nature" ended in æstheticism and a mysticism taken directly from Boehme. But as Boehme went further than mystical subjectivism, so did Hegel. Neither Boehme nor Hegel found that

[1] *Critique of Practical Reason,* 128.
[2] Quoted by Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists,* p. 51.
[3] Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion,* p. 384.
[4] See Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion,* Chap. XIX.

pure intuition gave true objectivity. Boehme passed through the gate of death with much pain to gain his insights. For Hegel "these (mystic) rockets are not the empyrean. True thoughts and scientific insights are only to be gained by the labor which comprehends and grasps its objects." [6] Hegel adopted a logic of experience which permitted the subject to be at once identical with the object and different from it. Each without the other is an unreal abstraction. Likewise Boehme in much cruder fashion, through a logic appearing like a chain of images and more deeply embedded in experience than Hegel's, attempted to show that the sinner must be himself and other than himself at the same time, at once human and divine, egoistic and altruistic. Boehme thus attempted to do in the ethical and religious field what Hegel attempted to do in the more inclusive epistemological field. However, though Boehme's conclusions resemble Hegel's, his method and vocabulary have more in common with Schopenhauer.

[6] *Prolegomena,* p. 53. Trans. by Wallace.

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All references to Boehme's works are to the Schiebler edition, Leipzig, 1843, in seven volumes. The chapters and verses are the same as in the first Amsterdam edition and later German editions. The various English translations have the same chapters, but unfortunately not the same verses as the German editions. As the *Aurora* in the Schiebler edition is not divided into verses I have used the verses in the English edition. The list here given of Boehme literature is not complete. It includes only those books examined by the author. These comprise, however, nearly all of importance which have been published.

The following is a list of Boehme's works in the order in which they were written with the abbreviations by which each work is referred to in this essay.

1612

1. Aurora (Morgenröthe im Aufgang) (A) or (Aur.).

1619

2. The Three Principles (Von den drei Principien) (T. P.).

1620

3. The Threefold Life (Vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen) (T. F. L.).
4. The Forty Questions (Vierzig Fragen von der Seele) (40 Q.).
5. The Incarnation (Von der Menschwerdung Christi) (Inc.).
6. The Six Points (Von sechs theosophischen Punckten) (S. P.).
7. The Six Mystical Points (Von sechs mystischen Punckten) (S. M. P.).
8. Mysterium Pansophicum (Vom himmlischen und irdischen Mysterio) (M. P.).
9. The Last Times (Von den letzten Zeiten).
10. Theoscopia (Von göttlicher Beschaulichkeit) (Beschau).

1621

11. The Four Complexions (Von den vier Complexionen) (F. C.).
12. Apologia I (Erste Schutzschrift wider Balthaser Tilken) (Apol. I).

13. Apologia II (Zweite Schutzschrift wider B. T.) (Apol. II).
14. Anti-Stiefelius I (Bedenken über Stiefels Büchlein) (Antist I).

1622

15. Anti-Stiefelius II (Vom Irrtum Stiefels und Meths) (Antist II).
16. Signatura Rerum (Von der Geburt und Bezeichnung aller Wesen) (S. R.).
17. Repentance (Von wahrer Busse) (Buss).
18. Regeneration (Von der Wiedergeburt) (Wiederg).
19. Resignation (Von der wahren Gellassenheit) (Gellas).
20. The Supersensual Life (Vom übersinnlichen Leben) (Supers. L.).

1623

21. Predestination (Von der Gnadenwahl) (Gnad.).
22. The Testaments (Von Christi Testamenten) (Test.).
23. Mysterium Magnum (Erklärung über das erste Buch Mosis) (M. M.).

1624

24. The Tables (Tafeln der Principiorum) (Taf.).
25. Gespräch einer erleuchteten und unerleuchteten Seele.
26. The Holy Week or Prayer Book. (Vom heiligen Gebet).
27. Apologia contra Richter (Schutzrede wider Gregorius Richter).
28. Von 177 theosophischen Fragen (Th. Q.).
29. Clavis (oder Schlüssel der vornehmsten Punkte). (Cl.).

1618-1624

30. Theosophische Briefe (Ep.).

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